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COMMONWEAL

A Review of Religion, Politics, and Culture

May 19, 2000

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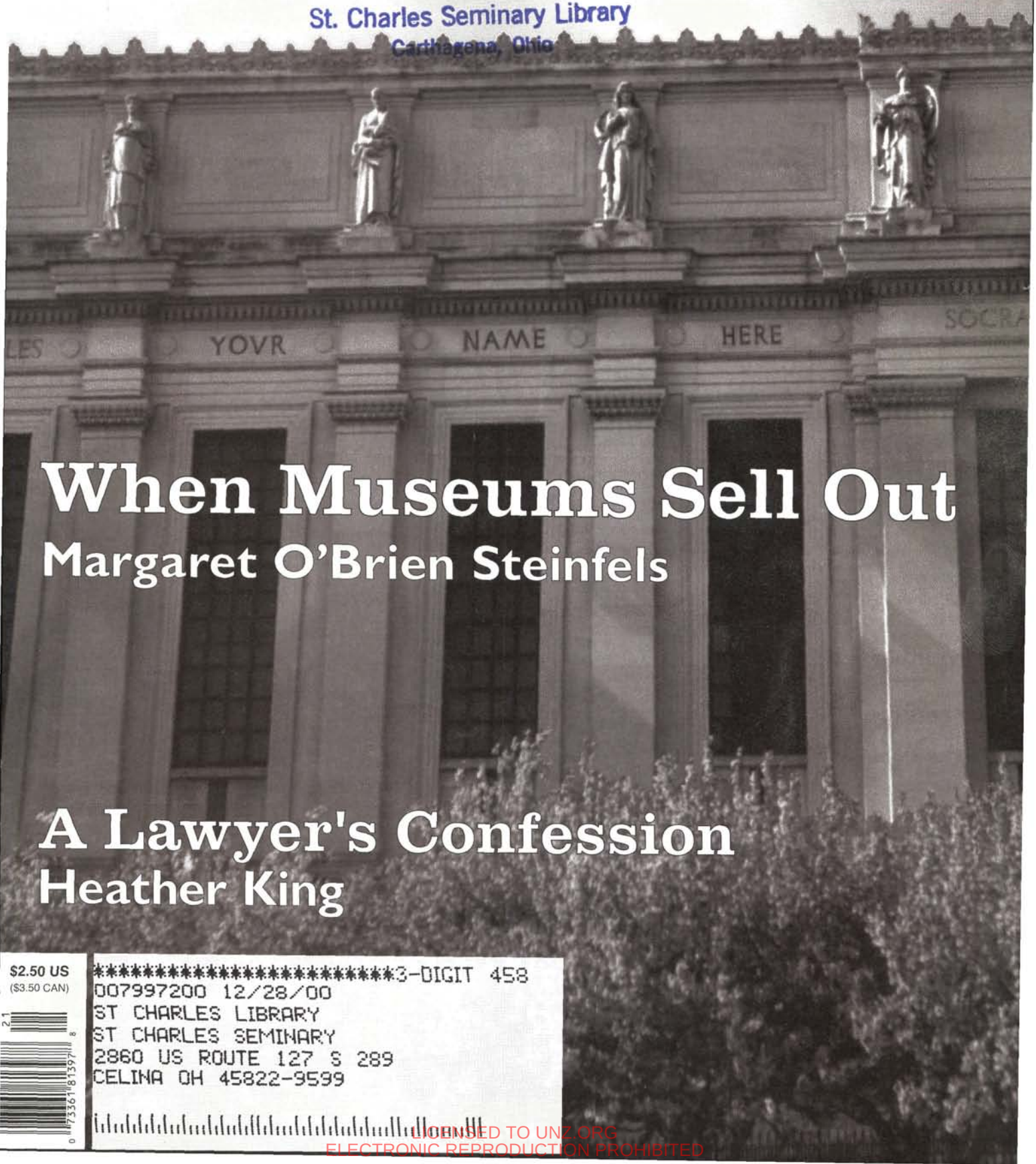

When Museums Sell Out

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels

A Lawyer's Confession

Heather King

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COMMONWEAL

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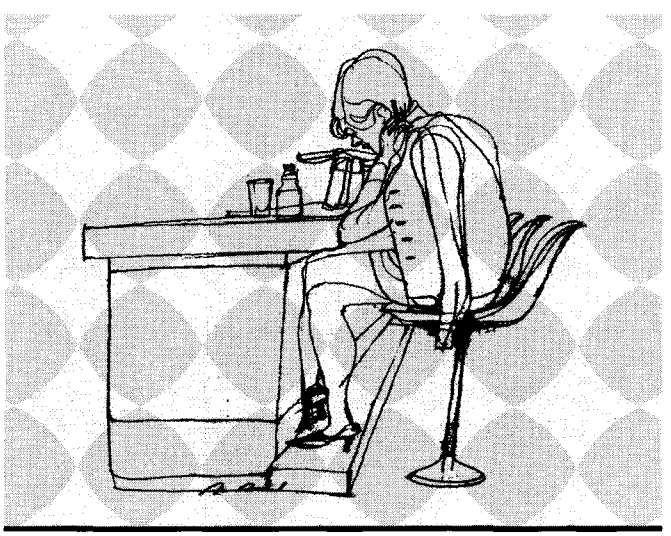

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To the Editors

A defense of abortion?

As a loyal reader of your magazine, I was extremely disappointed to see an advertisement for *A Brief, Liberal, Catholic Defense of Abortion* in your March 24 issue. If *Commonweal* is indexed in *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, under the *Catholic Periodical Index*, does that mean you claim to be a Catholic magazine? What does Catholic mean to you?

There is something disjointed about a magazine that runs an editorial attacking a film about abortion ["Hard Cider," March 24] and then runs the ad referenced above. One would hope that your magazine has a set of advertising guidelines. If so, should they not reflect your Catholic identity? There is nothing Catholic about abortion.

MARY REED
Alexandria, Va.

The editors reply:

Commonweal's policy concerning advertising mirrors, to some extent, how it decides what articles to publish. *Commonweal* is a journal of opinion edited by lay Catholics. One essential aspect of *Commonweal*'s Catholic identity is its commitment to reasoned debate on disputed questions. Thus *Commonweal* is open to the views of those who disagree with its editorial positions and even to those who disagree with the teachings of the church. That disagreement, however, must be presented in an intellectually responsible and respectful manner. An advertisement for a book that tries to make a philosophical case for legal abortion from within the Catholic tradition meets that standard; a simple declaration in favor of abortion rights does not. Needless to say, running an advertisement does not imply an endorsement of a book's view.

As it happens, *Commonweal*'s editor, Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, has reviewed *A Brief, Liberal, Catholic Defense of Abortion* for the Internet site beliefnet (*www.beliefnet.com*). She found the book's argument unpersuasive.

A vast conspiracy

I strongly agree with Wilson Carey McWilliams ["The Great Triangulator," April 21] that we had a right to hope for a lot more from a Clinton presidency than we got. But to characterize Clinton as "guided less by convictions than by an instinct for survival" is to misrepresent both the man and the situation. In the 1990s the nation needed someone to defang a potentially vicious Republican counterrevolution, and after Vietnam, Watergate, and two decades of ballooning deficits, to restore the people's belief that the federal government could act effectively in their best interests. That situation required a leader of both firm conviction and a strong instinct for survival. It seems to me Clinton evidenced those qualities when needed better than anyone on the political horizon then or since.

JOSEPH L. WALSH
Margate, N.J.

Re: Holocaust ethics

Professor Philip Devine [Correspondence, April 21] writes of my review [March 10] of Harry James Cargas's *Problems Unique to the Holocaust*: "throwing out the rule book, especially the rules restricting the taking of a human life, is about as perverse a response to the Holocaust as [Devine] can imagine." But I did not throw away the rule book. The Nazis did so when they made it a capital offense for a women to be found pregnant in a ghetto or a death camp. The point of the passage that I cited was that the Nazis' systematic contempt for life led observant Jews who believed deeply in the sanctity of life to do things in the death camps that they would never have done otherwise and that—as Rabbi Novick wisely counsels—do not count as a precedent for abortion or suicide outside of that context.

For Cargas, consistency on this matter came from context. It is one thing to refuse to condemn the victims of the Holocaust in the extreme conditions of the death camps. It is quite another for a layman to raise a respectful voice of protest over Pope John Paul II's meeting with Kurt Waldheim after the disclosure of Waldheim's complicity in the killing of Jews as a Nazi officer in the Balkans. Cargas didn't say, moreover, that the pope should not meet with Waldheim. He said that the pope bears the communal responsibility of correcting the teaching of contempt for Jews that led Waldheim and other Catholics to do the awful things they did. As it turns out, the pope quite agrees with that judgment.

EDWARD MCGLYNN GAFFNEY, JR.
Valparaiso, Ind.

That guy with the hankie

Patricia Hampl's article "The Sacrament of Reconciliation" [April 7] certainly brought back memories of that sacrament, as well as her parish, Saint Luke's, and her pastor, Monsignor Cullinan.

I was living in the parish next door in 1959. When my father indicated that he wanted to take instructions in the Catholic faith, we steered him to the classes conducted by Cullinan. Dad and Cullinan had some heated exchanges going back over the past, the Inquisition, etc. When it came to the end of instructions, Dad said he wanted to be baptized, and arranged to go to confession afterward to Monsignor Cullinan (not wimping out and selecting Father Kennedy, as Patricia did).

My wife and I accompanied Dad to the church one Saturday and sat in the back. Dad went into the confessional, and we listened to fifteen minutes of fairly loud whispers and sharp exchanges, which indicated that all the arguments had not been settled. Finally, Dad came out, red-faced, and, shortly

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Scouts' honor

Americans are deeply divided over what the moral, public, and legal status of homosexuality should be. A vast majority thinks homosexuals should be accorded broad toleration as a privacy matter and should not be discriminated against on the job. But most Americans are also hesitant to remake traditional and morally freighted institutions, such as marriage, in order to grant homosexual citizens civil parity with the heterosexual majority.

Last month the Supreme Court heard arguments in *The Boy Scouts of America* v. *Dale*, a case that touches on these public/private categories in all of their complexity. Do the Boy Scouts have the right to exclude openly homosexual persons from leadership positions? Or should the state's interest in battling discrimination trump the Scouts' allegiance to "traditional" morality?

In 1990 James Dale, a Rutgers University student, was dismissed as an assistant scoutmaster after making his homosexuality public. Dale sued the Boy Scouts, arguing that New Jersey law bars discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Last year the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in Dale's favor, determining that the Boy Scouts were a public accommodation and not a private organization, and therefore subject to the antidiscrimination law. The court ordered Dale reinstated. In appealing the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, the Boy Scouts argued that they are a private group with an "expressive" moral purpose, not a public accommodation like a restaurant or a theater. Furthermore, the ninety-year-old organization maintained that "a society in which each and every organization must be equally diverse is a society which has destroyed diversity," and that traditional moral strictures against homosexuality, implicit in the Scouts' famous oath, are an essential aspect of what Scouting is all about. Under the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech and free association, the Scouts think they should be allowed to determine for themselves who can be a Scout leader.

In rejecting those claims, New Jersey's court had ruled that the Scouts are a large, nonselective group that frequently meets in schools and other public facilities and that Scout troops are often sponsored by municipal police and fire departments. In other words, the Scouts are not as exclusive as a private club and are deeply entangled with civic institutions. The court also found that the Scouts' opposition to homosexuality was nowhere explicitly stated and that Dale's role as a scoutmaster therefore did not endanger the purposes of the organization.

On the face of it, Dale would seem to have a strong case. The Boy Scouts' involvement with public institutions is broad, and Dale himself, a former Eagle Scout, was evidently an exemplary scoutmaster. However, Dale's abilities or sincerity are not in question. Nor should private organizations forfeit their autonomy because they are engaged in civic duties. Instead, the U.S. Supreme Court is likely to be more concerned with the Boy Scouts' rights of free association and speech. The Court has previously ruled that groups whose primary purposes are commercial, such as Jaycee and Rotary clubs, do not have the right to restrict membership to men. But where an organization's purpose is not economic, the right of free association is greater. For example, the U.S. Supreme

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Court has said that the organizers of Boston's Saint Patrick's Day parade have the right to determine who could participate and thus may exclude gay groups. Other state courts have upheld the Boy Scouts' right to exclude atheists (an explicit belief in God is part of the Scout oath) and girls, just as some feminist organizations restrict their membership to women and civil rights groups bar Ku Klux Klan members. An organization of gay libertarians has even filed a brief in support of the Boy Scouts. A ruling against the Scouts, the libertarians argue, will put the self-selectivity of gay groups in peril.

In this case, the demand that antidiscrimination law be used to compel the private moral acceptance of homosexual conduct crosses a line. It puts the Court in the position of dictating an organization's position—an organization that acts on behalf of boys and their parents—about a much contested moral issue. The full implications of the profound changes taking place in our understanding of homosexuality are far from clear. For some the treatment of homosexuals is a simple civil rights issue, for others it is a question of basic sexual morality. The mission of the Boy Scouts, as now constituted in its own bylaws, is to shape the moral character of children and adolescents. Given that fact, the public status of homosexuality should be worked out in ways that demonstrate a maximum tolerance for reasonable people on both (actually many) sides of what remains a profoundly divisive question. James Dale should be free to press his case with the Boy Scouts, just as gay Catholics should continue their efforts to persuade the church to rethink its attitude about the "inherently disordered" nature of homosexuality. Perhaps, as the New Jersey court claims, Dale's sexual orientation does not in any way jeopardize the purposes of scouting. But that is a decision the Boy Scouts—or the church, as the case may be—must make in its own way and by its own lights. The courts should not force the Boy Scouts to embrace a view of homosexuality they cannot in good conscience adopt as their own. Tolerance must work both ways on this difficult issue.

CARDINAL O'CONNOR, R.I.P.

John Dubois (1764–1842), the only non-Irish bishop to lead the church in New York, is buried beneath the entrance to Old Saint Patrick's Cathedral in Lower Manhattan. Dubois's tenure as bishop was stormy, and he battled his mostly Irish congregants on many issues, including the ownership of parishes and the appointment of priests. Often he lost. "They walked over me in life," Dubois is supposed to have said about his burial plot. "Let them walk over me in death." The trustees of the cathedral obliged.

Cardinal John O'Connor, New York's outspoken archbishop for the last sixteen years, was not a man anyone was likely to walk over. When he died earlier this month after a largely discreet battle with cancer, his passing was noted with sadness and praise by Catholic and non-Catholic alike. O'Connor was a stalwart champion of the poor, the working class, and the so-called man in the street. He was a fierce defender of labor unions, an advocate for AIDS victims, and a strong opponent of anti-Semitism. After a long and distinguished career as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy, he became more and more outspoken on issues of peace and skeptical about military spending. Theologically he did not shy away from the label "conservative," and he was a firm supporter of Pope John Paul II's sometimes counterproductive efforts to curb dissent and impose discipline within the church. O'Connor's influence with the pope, especially on the appointment of bishops, was substantial. Whether or not that influence was beneficial remains a question. In the public debate about abortion, homosexuality, sex education, capital punishment, and similar issues he was an unapologetic proponent of the church's views. He did not hesitate to call prochoice Catholic politicians to task for what he saw as the abandonment of Catholic principle. Yet even those who clashed with the cardinal, such as former New York Governor Mario Cuomo, were impressed with O'Connor's forthrightness, his ready sense of humor, and his commitment to the church's social teachings.

Much has been written about O'Connor as a man who placed institutional loyalty at the center of his sense of himself as a priest and bishop. There is truth in that description, although it shortchanges the pastoral and evangelical emphasis O'Connor brought to his ministry. For the most part, he had his priorities right. The gospel places the poor, the needy, and the sinner at the forefront of the church's mission. The next archbishop of New York could do far worse than to emulate O'Connor's example in that regard. Where the next leader of New York's church could broaden O'Connor's legacy is in how he engages the world of ideas and art. New York is the cultural capital of the nation, if not the world. Much of the cultural elite in the media, the universities, and the arts remain notoriously indifferent, if not openly hostile, to the church. This continuing antagonism represents a loss for both communities, but it especially inhibits the church's ability to get a fair hearing in the larger culture. Like O'Connor's generous overtures to the Jewish community and for ecumenism in general, New York's next archbishop should work to break down the stereotypes on both sides of this cultural divide. Though opposed on several neuralgic issues, the two communities could make common cause on many others. There is something anomalous about a church that exists in the smithy of modern culture—a culture whose appeal extends to the vast majority of Catholics—and yet seems removed from the forces and people shaping that culture. Establishing a dialogue and mutual respect between Catholicism and New York's cultural institutions could go far to improve the effectiveness of the church's countercultural moral message, a message Cardinal O'Connor represented so well.

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JOHN GARVEY

OPTING OUT OF BELIEF

For unserious reasons

You hear people say that it is difficult to be a believer in our society. Though there are many ways in which this is true, we should reexamine the idea. America is, after all, more religious than most nations. Here professed belief and church attendance are taken as an index, and dispiriting as life in the era of Clinton may be, it is easier to be a Christian now than it was under the Emperor Decius. That very ease may be part of the problem, but it is only a part of it. Unease—a profound unease—is also involved.

Belief is influenced by the atmosphere in which it finds itself. However, belief is not something that can be reduced to moral issues, though the culture will have an effect on how we look at morality. Belief itself is a different thing. What does it mean to assert a belief in God—or, for that matter, belief in the possibility of encountering any transforming truth—in our kind of society? To a serious believer it must mean more than simply "this is to my taste."

Belief competes with many alternatives. One of them is indifference, a sense that is not really agnosticism but rather a kind of "so what?" Principled agnosticism can be intellectually admirable, even sympathetic; indifference is not. It is the result of a culture that has placed distraction and gratification so firmly at the center that they completely dominate the lives of millions, including many people who remain culturally attached to churches, synagogues, mosques, or temples, people who often think of themselves as in some sense religious. These buildings and the holidays associated with them are not central to their lives in any important way. They are more like "our song"; their hold is at best sentimental.

One piece of this problem is not uniquely contemporary. Other cultures have paid lip service to religion, while paying their real attention to money, power, and pleasure. We have placed wealth and reverence for wealth not only at the center—most other cultures have done that—but a particular kind of wealth, a particular kind of fame and celebrity. Mother Teresa, Princess Diana, Richard Gere, the pope, John Gotti—all are similarly candidates for the cover of *People* (well, maybe not Gotti), and therefore equally important. When religious leaders regard it as a coup to be endorsed by celebrities, or to receive an award from Congress, or to be photographed with presidents and senators, they become part of the problem. When Dorothy Day was told that some people considered her a saint, she famously said, "I won't be dismissed that easily." People who allow themselves to be seduced by the aura of celebrity make themselves dismissible.

Indifference allows this sort of floating (and fleeting) regard. But there is another chilling side to indifference. For many people, it is as easy to drop a religion as it is to lose an umbrella. This is where the unease enters. How can something which claims to be about so much that matters—our reason for being in the world, the story of one who died for us—be so easily laid aside?

I have known people raised in constricting Catholic, Jewish, Evangelical, and Eastern Orthodox environments, who rejected their upbringing in angry or disappointed ways. While disagreeing, I can understand the emotional and familial dynamics involved in their drifting away. I am more troubled by friends whose excuses seem too easy. These don't involve serious doubts or difficult family backgrounds. Liturgical boredom is enough, or the feeling that church takes too much time. This seems too little a reason to sever a connection that should (given what we say it is about) be more vital, more urgent.

I have heard that in Ireland, after clergy and hierarchy were involved in sexual scandals, there was a falloff of religious practice, not only among the young, but especially among those over fifty. I have seen a small Orthodox parish reduced to nearly nothing by a sexual scandal involving the priest. I can understand this reaction, up to a point. It is, after all, the clergy and hierarchy who insist on the continuing validity of traditional norms which restrict sexual activity to married men and women. They are the transmitters not only of this teaching, but of all the sacraments. Sexual fidelity and honoring one's word (whether this involves a vow of marriage or a commitment to celibacy) go to the heart of who we are. It is easy to see how someone faced with hypocrisy and deception in this area (or to be more charitable than I am inclined to be, with weakness where honor and honesty are concerned) would simply abandon the whole thing.

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And still, much as I can sympathize with the disgust of the leave-takers, I think they are wrong; even more wrong are those who can spend a life around the story of Jesus and remain unmoved enough to leave the church because of their boredom. There is a tone-deafness here which is largely the fault of the church, but this does not absolve each of us from the duty to try to hear, through all the hypocrisy and boredom, the words of Jesus, or to try to see what it means that someone loves us enough to die for us. If the behavior of bishops and priests seems to stand in the way—if at times the church itself seems to—we have to remember that even at the Last Supper, even in the act of blessing the bread and wine, Jesus tells us: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table" (Luke 22: 20-21). Betrayal and duplicity are there from the start.

Those who feel betrayed by their experience of the church are not wrong in their feeling, but they have a duty to the rest of the body to which they have been joined in baptism. When the Orthodox church in Russia was, institutionally, a weak and subservient department of the state, there were saints whose lives illuminated the lives of those around them. The church in Francis of Assisi's day was a mess, and saints have lived under thoroughly corrupt popes. It is the duty of baptized people to be Christians, too often despite the people chosen to lead them canonically.

The greatest danger of our culture, in making a religious commitment a matter of consumer choice, is that we will not see that this commitment is finally a matter of life and death, for us and for a much larger community, one to which we have an obligation. Our culture allows us to take nothing seriously except what we perceive to be our needs and desires. Unless these have been informed by a relationship with the living God they will mislead us.

If the church itself does not offer a way toward that relationship, or in practice can even stand in its way, it is still our obligation to dig more deeply into the tradition, to try to hear the voice of Jesus—even when we feel entombed, like Lazarus. The church is necessary, because we cannot break the bread and drink the wine alone. Jesus asks, in Luke 18:8, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" Perhaps our hope lies in the restoration of this eschatological understanding that the Lord is coming, and our deepest vocation is to be aware of that, despite everything in the culture, even in the church, that may seem to stand in his way. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

E.J. DIONNE, Jr.

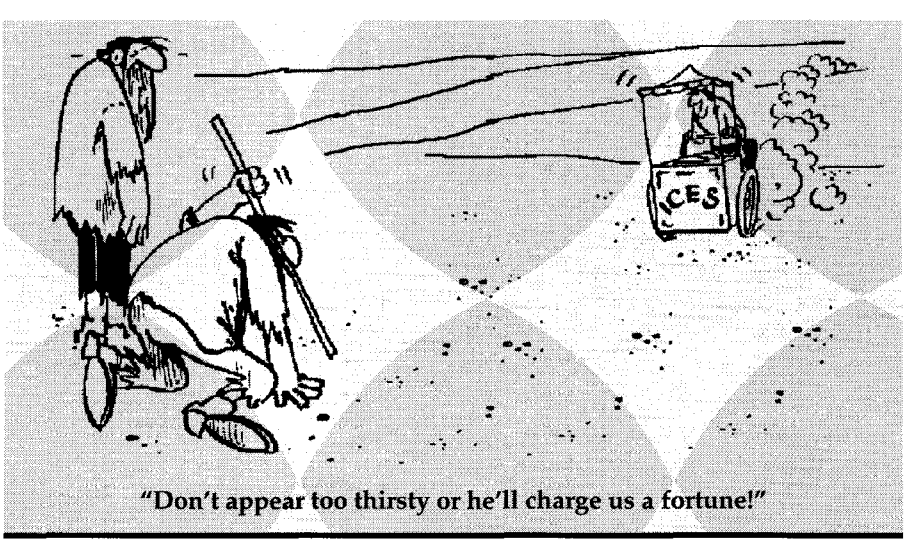
KEEPING PROMISES

What we owe the working poor

It's fashionable to talk about poor Americans left out of the economic boom. It's not fashionable to do much about their problems. In Congress and on the campaign trail, a favorite pastime for members of both parties is to brag about the welfare reform bill passed in 1996. The bragging is over the sharp drop in the welfare rolls brought about by a prosperity that has created so many new jobs, and also by the bill's tough welfare-to-work provisions. George W. Bush regularly boasts about the decline in Texas's welfare rolls, while Al Gore trumpets his premier role in pushing welfare reform against the wishes of some of the leading voices in his own party. It's hard to oppose the core principle behind the welfare bill: public assistance should be temporary and the system should help the poor find jobs and pursue independence.

But supporters of the bill insisted they weren't just being punitive. They said they wanted benefits—Medicaid, food stamps, child care, transportation assistance, and children's health insurance—to follow poor people off the rolls and help support them as they found their footing in the workplace. These benefits are especially important to the children of the poor, and no member of Congress likes to look mean to kids.

The problem, according to a new study released earlier this month, is that many states are denying the working poor benefits to which they are legally entitled. That undermines the incentives that Congress pledged to put in place on behalf of the working poor. "Even if you're a proponent of welfare reform, you'd be shocked at what's happening," says Lissa Bell, policy director of the Seattle-based Northwest Federation of Community Organizations. If the purpose of



"Don't appear too thirsty or he'll charge us a fortune!"

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welfare reform is "self-sufficiency," that idea is "not being adequately reflected" in actual administration of the programs, she says.

What Bell and her co-author, Carson Strege-Flora, found were many cases of states and localities violating federal rules by imposing waiting periods for programs that are supposed to have none; creating cumbersome application rules to make it hard for eligible people to get benefits; and misinforming the working poor about what help was available to them. Now if there is good news in any of this, it is that community groups around the nation are organizing to put the cause of the working poor at the center of the national debate. Paradoxically, those who were most critical of the welfare bill when it passed may end up saving welfare reform by insisting that those willing to labor hard for low wages be lifted out of poverty. "The people who are being denied access to these programs are people who work," says Deepak Bhargava, director of the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support, which was launched this month at a meeting in Chicago and sponsored the study. The Campaign is a coalition of about a thousand community groups, including faith-based and neighborhood organizations. "Its goal is to put poverty back on the national agenda," he says.

The devolution of power to the states, an idea associated with conservatives, is unleashing a wave of activism by the poor and their supporters. "The interesting thing about the devolution phenomenon," Bhargava says, "is that it's really put the ball in the court of the community organizations." They are demonstrating "a new level of sophistication about public policy politics." But in the end, he says, these groups will also look to Washington to make sure states run programs for the working poor by the rules. And Washington will necessarily play a large role in any serious expansion of benefits for those who work but are still trapped in poverty. Universal health care would be a nice place to start.

"Poverty is the great invisible problem in the national discourse," Bhargava says. "It's not being talked about because there hasn't been much political pressure from the people affected. And the problem is usually defined by the success of welfare reform in getting people off the rolls, as opposed to the failure to make much of a dent in the poverty rate."

This ought to be the most promising of times for programs to alleviate poverty. Public coffers at all levels are bulging, thanks to good economic times. The old welfare system is dead and most government assistance is now flowing to those who work—meaning that the vast majority of voters approve of the values now embedded in the programs. If we're not willing to do more to help the working poor, what does that say about our much advertised commitment to the value of work? And how devoted are we to that sentiment now roaringly popular on the campaign trail, compassion? □

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A computer pioneer's crisis of faith

Women, married men, and active gays should all be ordained, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger told *L' Osservatore Romano* today. "'The clergy must be representative of the faithful.'" One can imagine the reactions such a statement would elicit. Similarly, when Bill Joy, computer guru extraordinaire, wrote in the April issue of *Wired* magazine that, if unchecked, technology would bring human society to extinction, the scientific-technological community was astounded. Since its inception, *Wired* has been the cheerleader for the new information era, exulting in an Internet-fueled transformation of human life and an era of unparalleled economic growth. It shares a libertarian belief that innovation and skill are goods in themselves, and that the Internet should remain a totally self-regulating community. Hackers are its natural heroes.

Styled by *Fortune* "the Edison of the Internet," Bill Joy is a founder and now chief scientist for Sun Microsystems, and former cochairman of a presidential commission on the future of information technology. In his *Wired* article, "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us," Joy argues that we are making humans an "endangered species," and that it is time to "rethink our utopian choices."

To understand Joy's new-found fears, one must look at their origin. His new dystopian vision is rooted in his utopianism. Joy traces his unease to a meeting with Ray Kurzweil, inventor of the first reading machine for the blind and author of *The Age of Intelligent Machines*. Kurzweil foresees—and welcomes—an era in which humans will fuse with robots. Joy notes that Kurzweil quotes extensively from the *Unabomber Manifesto* of Ted Kaczynski, which presents two alternatives: either humans allow machines to take over completely (since they will make better decisions), or we act to maintain control over them. Still, in the latter case, large systems will continue to be under the sway of elites, and once machines can do the work the elites require, the masses will no longer be needed.

Now enter thinkers like Hans Moravec, founder of the world's largest robotics program at Carnegie Mellon University and the author of *Robot: Mere Machine to Dependent Mind*. According to Moravec, robots are another species, one in competition—necessarily successful—with humanity. As humans are squeezed toward extinction, we will be forced to merge with robots, sacrificing our identity for the promise of virtual immortality.

Joy believes rising computer power will create an intelligent robot by 2030, and that eventually robots will reproduce themselves, without requiring human intervention.

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Whereas older methods of mass destruction, such as the atom bomb, required huge operations that were relatively easy to detect, twenty-first-century technologies—genetics, nanotechnology (extremely small devices operating at the atomic level), and robotics (these three collectively known as GNR)—will not require large facilities or rare raw materials. Instead, knowledge alone will enable their production and use. With unprecedented knowledge at the command of robots, humans will become expendable. Thus, writes Joy, we face "knowledge-enabled mass destruction," a destructiveness "amplified by the power of self-replication."

A second lurking danger is that humans, wittingly or not, will one day download their consciousness into robots, just as we now download computer data, which will lead to the eventual loss of our humanity. (The chemical interactions of neurons in the brian, Kurzweil has speculated, can be replicated electronically.) Genetic engineering will present multiple problems, not only the prospect of human cloning—still far off—but of unanticipated consequences, such as those already associated with altered crops, migration across species, etc. Nanotechnology is further along than we once realized, says Joy, and "as with nuclear technology, it is far easier to create destructive uses for nanotechnology than constructive ones." What most alarms Joy, however, is GNR's "power of destructive self-replication." In the twentieth century, nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons were military in nature, and were developed primarily in government laboratories. But in GNR, we are aggressively pursuing powerful new technologies "within the now unchallenged system of global capitalism and its manifold financial incentives and competitive pressures."

What can be done to protect against these dangers? Joy believes we must abandon our present course: "The only realistic alternative I see is relinquishment: to limit development of the technologies that are too dangerous, by limiting our pursuit of certain kinds of knowledge." Is this possible? While pessimistic, Joy believes there is some basis for hope. He notes that the world's leaders have virtually abandoned the drive to develop new weapons of mass destruction. Still, to relinquish GNR will be far more complicated. It will require not only an unprecedented system of verification but also a powerful code of ethical conduct capable of forcing scientists and engineers to eschew—and even report—work on "knowledge-enabled mass destruction." Such a prospect flies in the face of the age-old quest of Western science for knowledge and domination.

Are Joy's fears—let alone his hopes—justified? The key question concerns robotic self-replication. Someday, mobile robots, nano or full-sized, may be able to acquire the physical materials necessary for their own reproduction. Will they be aware of it? Whether machines can attain self-consciousness is the greatest controversy in the artificial intelligence community. Joy notes that Berkeley philosopher John Searle—himself not a theist—argues, on philosophical grounds, that machines cannot become conscious, that all they can do is computation [*see* Bernard Prusak, page 28]. If Searle is right—despite the perils created by genetic engineering and human-robot hybrids—humanity has a future. Human choice—expressed through the workings of organized society—will be capable of controlling unbridled science-based change. Whether we will so choose is an entirely different matter.

Joy's discussion does not consider the vast proportion of human beings who are, and will continue to be, dirt poor, and those in the thrall of deadly ethnic and religious passions. He fails to touch on how people in these groups will react to the technological perils of the twenty-first century. Yet his salient essay has a great deal to say about our present impasse. Religion has been replaced by science as the source of apocalyptic dread, and the age-old temptation to grasp at immortality has yielded to the scientific quest for that goal through technology. As Carl Jung pointed out long ago, flying saucers have replaced angels in the popular imagination, and space travel has become the cornerstone of our new mythology. Whether, in order to have a future, we will need to revive the old categories and myths that have traditionally inspired civilization may, in the final analysis, be the deeper question underpinning Joy's amazing apostasy. □

Victor Ferkiss, *a long-time contributor, is the author of* The Future of Technological Civilization.

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QUITTING THE BAR, TWICE

What the law taught me about faith

Heather King

Somewhere around the last years of my drinking I decided to go to law school. It was not a very well thought-out plan. One night I was holding court in my usual loud-mouthed fashion on my barstool at Boston's Beacon Hill Pub when someone remarked, "You ought to be a lawyer." At the time, I was so bereft of my own ideas, so starved for direction, that I took the chance comment of a virtual stranger and determined forthwith to build my life around it. Yes, I thought to myself, I *should* be a lawyer! I conveniently set aside the small facts that, in spite of a social service degree, I had never done any kind of work other than waitressing, that I was incapable of going without a drink for the eight or nine hours a regular job required, that I was not even sure what lawyers did.

Since my hangovers ruled out all possibility of commuting, I focused instead on the fortuitous circumstance that a law school was handily located just two blocks from my apartment. Once I was accepted—I applied to just that one place—I figured that, somewhere along the line, I'd have to study so hard I would *naturally* cut down on my drinking. Somewhere along the line I would be transformed from a person with a nervous system so sensitive that, when sober, merely being addressed by a fellow human being almost caused me to hyperventilate, into a bold, assertive, self-confident advocate for victims of racial oppression and gender discrimination. Somewhere along the line, I would stop being disenfranchised and clueless and start being privy to the inner workings of The Law. Not the law of right-wing, terrorist Amerika, of course—for even in the early eighties, I was nothing if not a good child of the sixties—but the Thurgood Marshall, *Brown* v. *The Board of Education*, ACLU-type of law, the sacred kind of law that dug right down into the essence of how we live, in order to effect change, help people, make the world a better place.

I had always secretly suspected that everyone but me had been handed a rule book at birth. This sense of alienation and deficiency, this intuition that I had missed some kind of essential truth available to everyone else was, in fact, the very reason I so ceaselessly craved the oblivion of alcohol. Now, for the first time in my life, I told myself, I would be at the very heart of *how things worked*.

Heather King, *a previous contributor, lives in Los Angeles. Her work has appeared in* Notre Dame Magazine *and other publications.*

People sometimes ask me, "How could you have gotten through law school drunk?" My answer is that there is no way I could have gotten through law school if I *hadn't* been drunk. One of the first things we were plunged into, for example, was the moot court competition, a nerve-racking, nail-biting event that entailed researching and writing a brief on an assigned topic, presenting it to a panel of black-robed alumni, and, while an assembled throng of professors and classmates watched you squirm, attempting to respond to a barrage of supercilious, hypothetical, unanswerable questions such as, "How do you propose to reconcile the Rule against Perpetuities with the doctrine of *res ipsa loquitur*?" or "What is the proximate cause of a counter-offer?"

We prepared for months, researching esoteric points of law, polishing our papers, and listening to endless tips from our earnest legal-skills professor, who was fresh out of law school herself. She could not impress upon us firmly enough the solemnity of the occasion, the august company, the credentials of the corporate lawyers, appeals court judges, and Harvard professors who had deigned to rearrange their busy schedules and grace us lowly students with their presence. We women were not to wear our skirts too short or

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our heels too high or our earrings too dangly. We were all to dress in conservative colors, speak in a modulated, pleasant voice, and say "thank you" at the end.

"Now, are there any last questions about how to conduct yourselves from the podium?" she asked.

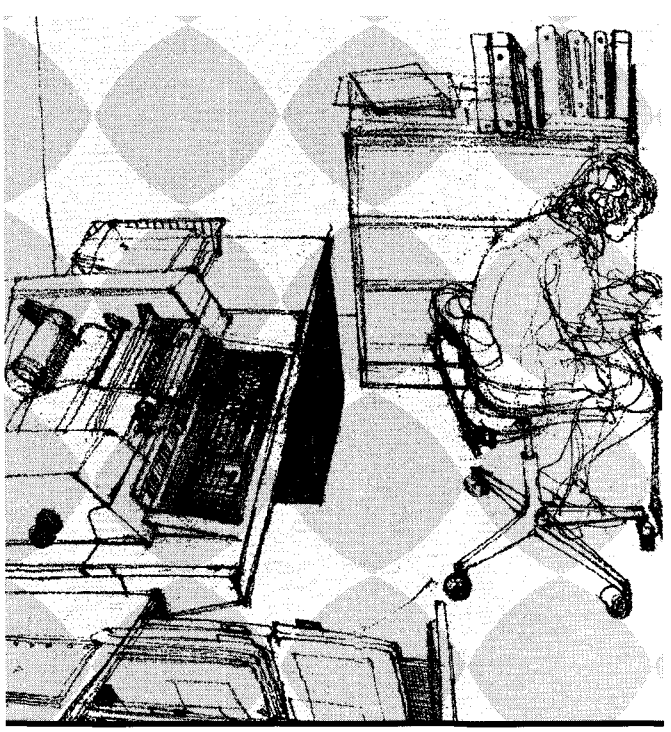
I raised my hand from the back of the room.

"Yes?" she nodded.

"Can we smoke?" I asked.

I'd wanted to lighten things up a little bit but instead, chalk in hand, the professor literally froze in horror. She didn't even get that it was a joke—hardly anybody did—and that was when I saw that the worst thing about The Law was going to be that it lacked all sense of humor.

Time bore me out: as the months passed, I searched in vain for a subject that wasn't deadly boring, dry as dust, and leached of every detail of the kind that makes things interesting in real life. The contracts questions featured companies that manufactured widgets: I wondered what the secretaries ate for lunch. The real property examples had a hypothetical estate called Blackacre: I pictured what kinds of trees might grow on it. I did manage to work up some affection for a few first-year tort cases. There was the aunt who sued her five-year-old nephew for battery. When she had gone to sit down in a lawn chair, he had snatched it out from beneath her and she had fallen, fracturing her hip. There was the woman who sued a stock boy in a grocery store for intentional infliction of emotional distress because she had asked him the price of an item he was marking and he had replied, "If you want to know the price, you'll have to find out the best way you can. *You stink to me.*" There was the jilted lover who had thrown lye in his girlfriend's face, completely disfiguring her, and to which the legal textbook writers, in an unprecedented show of human interest, had thoughtfully added a footnote saying that when the guy had finally gotten out of jail, *she married him*. Opening yet another bottle of rotgut wine I knew would lead to yet another blackout, yet another savage hangover, yet another attack of excoriating guilt, I particularly identified with that gal's gluttony for punishment.



The thing about law school that is ideal for an alcoholic is that there is only one exam and it is at the end of the course. The first year all the courses lasted both semesters, which meant we didn't have any exams until May. Then we had five, each of which required reviewing an entire year's worth of notes and material. I faced this ordeal by going on the wagon, forcibly tearing myself away from the dreamy part of my brain and switching over to the military part that dealt with useless detail and rote memorization, and burying myself in the basement of the library from seven in the morning until ten at night for fourteen solid days. Actually, this was right up my alley: anything that reeks of the hair shirt, torture, and self-mortification, I'm an expert at. When the marks came out, I was seventh in my class of over three hundred.

This induced in me a brief surge of hope, but getting good marks and functioning in the world are two entirely different things. I did not, for instance, work a single day the whole time I was in law school; by going without new clothing, food, and all entertainment besides a weekly stack of library books, I was able to survive on student loans and the hundred dollars my loving, oblivious, poverty-stricken parents sent me every other week. While the other students were currying favor with professors and cultivating mentors, I was picking up strangers at the Beacon Hill Pub. While the other students were taking summer internships, I was taking the Blue Line to Revere Beach, lying hung-over in the sun for a few hours, then repairing to the Hi-Lo lounge to swill $1.25 vodka gimlets for the rest of the afternoon. I somehow managed to graduate with honors and pass the bar exam but, by that time, I had taken to starting the day with seven or eight Sea Breezes with the cirrhotic drunks at Sullivan's Tap and was more unemployable than ever.

After going back to waitressing for a year or so, I finally stopped drinking, worked as a real estate title examiner for a few years, got married, and moved to Los Angeles. For me, these were all huge accomplishments for which I was deeply, uncomprehendingly grateful. Nevertheless, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the fact that practicing law was still the most terrifying thing I could imagine, I was consumed by the conviction that only by working as a lawyer could I prove I was not the loser and weakling I had always feared myself to be.

After getting sober, I had embarked on a vaguely defined spiritual journey. I had gone through a long stage when I thought everything about the world was wrong, but now, having dimly grasped the concept of humility—like everything else, taking it to its furthest extreme—I was at a point where I thought everything about *me* was wrong. If law

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school had seemed irrelevant and boring, I told myself, it was a defect in me, not law school; it was *my* fear, *my* reluctance to become a full-fledged dues-paying citizen, *my* arrogance that made me feel different and alone. Then, too, there was still that concept of The Law, shimmering in my imagination like some Holy Grail. Now that I was sober, I thought, perhaps The Law would give shape to those ideals I was seriously starting to think about: Truth. Justice. Right.

After the extra year or so it took me to work up the courage to draft a résumé and go to an interview, I was hired by a downtown firm whose office was in such stupendous disarray that I didn't take a lunch break in the first six months. I'd entertained visions of matte black accessories, cherrywood paneling, and recessed lighting. Instead, the lobby carpet was a liverish mauve, the walls were hung with Monet lily-pad prints in cheap gilt frames, and the coffee table, a white plastic cube, was covered with year-old copies of *Fortune* and *Sports Illustrated*. Down a hallway piled with boxes of Xerox paper, I had my own room. The floor was heaped with medical records and rolled-up exhibits, the waferboard walls were marred with Scotch tape and nail holes, and the windows faced south, affording, on rare smog-free days, a glimpse of the ocean and, during the 1992 Rodney King riots, a panoramic view of the city going up in smoke.

I was instantly disabused of any notion that workplace camaraderie might ease my transition into the legal world. Frank, my supervising partner, was a cigar-smoking bachelor eight years my junior who specialized in personal-injury and employment-discrimination cases and, as I knelt by the supply cabinet for a box of paper clips, considered it the height of wit to inquire, "On your knees *again*?" Eric, the paralegal, had a bald spot and clammy hands, twiddled a knockoff Mont Blanc pen, and wore a blazer with a gold insignia over the breast pocket. With two years of experience, he considered himself an expert on the American legal system and everything connected with it. He belittled judges, second-guessed lawyers, and aired long-winded opinions on the ways in which the law should be rewritten and administered. He critiqued the intelligence and experience of various justices of the United States Supreme Court, held forth for hours on the science of jury selection, and rated the performance of the city's top trial lawyers.

Luckily, since I would have been entirely incapable of doing any such thing, I was not hired to try cases—that was Frank's forte—but to clean up the trail of destruction that he, with Eric's help, had left behind. I wrote appeals for cases that had been dismissed because the statute of limitations had run, motions for relief from defaults that had been entered because nobody had sorted the mail, oppositions to summary-judgment motions which were unwinnable because no one had ever gotten around to conducting the appropriate discovery. Having been lulled by law school into thinking that lawyers pondered interesting questions about chains of causation and the formation of contracts, I kept thinking, "When am I going to get to do some real legal work?"

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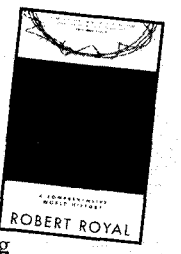

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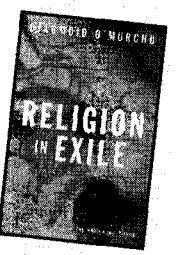

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After a while I realized this was what real lawyers did their whole lives.

Frank's m.o. was to sit around shooting the breeze for a couple of weeks, get four or five extensions of time for filing a major motion, wait till the last possible minute, and then announce at 6:30 Friday night that I had to work all weekend. Once I cleared away the wreckage of the past, I saw that we could reduce workplace stress, increase the chance of winning cases, and promote cooperation with clients, court clerks, and other attorneys by simply adopting a rudimentary form of organization. Envisioning proudly the way my contribution would make things easier for everyone, I devoted all my energy to not missing deadlines, not asking for extensions, not making the secretary stay late.

Unfortunately, nothing could have impressed Frank less, and I never quite recovered from the shock of discovering that he found my best, most sacrificial efforts barely worthy of notice. Instead, he viewed me as a pitiful crackpot and I got stuck doing not only my own work, but Eric's as well. To make matters worse, it became immediately apparent that I was not cut out for the confrontational world of trial law: even *agreeing* with people made me nervous. My heart sank just approaching the courthouse. Although I neurotically overprepared for even the simplest status conference, in my mind it was always a crapshoot as to whether I'd make it to the counsel table or, halfway there, descend into catatonia and have to be led gently away to the county mental health center. Those hours in court, waiting to argue motions, were the times when I felt most keenly the absurdity of my position. I was often overcome by a loneliness so acute I had to restrain myself from turning to touch the face of the person beside me.

Underlying every other loathsome aspect of my job was the fact that I hated Eric with a festering hatred. I burned with it, writhed with it, fanned the flames of it morning, noon, and night by pinpointing, categorizing, and analyzing his infinite character defects: his stupidity, his cunning sloth, his soft, sluglike hands.

Eric had some complicated system of lists and little index cards bordered in blue that he was constantly rearranging in various slits on the inside cover of a leatherette portfolio he carried around at all times, but his true "specialty" was taking referral calls from potential clients. Simpering, he came into my office one morning, held his arm extended straight out for a moment, and let a fax drop into my box.

"It's from your good friend, Betsy Gould," he said archly. "Looks like they aren't going to cough up those documents, after all. Still playing games. I told Frank not to take that case."

In fact, Betsy was my bitterest enemy, and the case—a medical malpractice, my least favorite kind—was hopeless. Eric was vocal in his opinion that "we'd" never make any money on it, so Frank had simply excused him from participating and, as usual, was making me do all the work. I glanced at the fax and saw that it meant drafting a motion to compel the production of evidence, a time-consuming, tediously grinding exercise in futility.

"Number one," Eric was saying, rapping his knuckles against the wall like some self-important professor, "even downtown you're not going to get a jury that will find against a hospital in favor of a fat, black, convicted felon with cocaine on his tox report. Number two..."

"Eric, we've only been over this about a million times," I interrupted, in a voice that could have cut through steel. "Have you got those expert-witness subpoenas for Robinson yet?"

He ignored this completely. "I've told him I don't know how many times, this case is a big"—he hung his hands limply like paws—"BOW-WOW!"

I closed my eyes, counted to ten, and said evenly, "Eric. Where are the Robinson subpoenas?"

"I mean I've been telling him since Day One," he continued, clamping his nostrils together with thumb and forefinger—"this case STINKS."

"The SUBPOENAS!" I hissed, springing to my feet like a rottweiler ready to jump across the desk. "Did you get them or not?"

Eric looked up in surprise and asked, "What subpoenas?"

"Oh, forget it," I muttered, picturing for a moment how lovely his head would look if I delivered it to Frank on a plate. "I'll do it myself."

Underlying every other loathsome aspect of my job was the fact that I hated Eric with a festering hatred. I burned with it, writhed with it, fanned the flames of it morning, noon, and night by pinpointing, categorizing, and analyzing his infinite character defects: his stupidity, his cunning sloth, his soft, sluglike hands. My resentment was a creation I worked on behind my closed office door: a sculpture, carved from a mass of indignities and slights, whose contours I endlessly, obsessively reshaped. I could even have tolerated Eric if I'd felt that I was getting a grip on the essential truth I longed for, but the actual practice of law, as opposed to the abstractions of law school, only plunged me deeper into confusion.

The adversarial system of civil law is based on the curious notion that the surest way to *reveal* the truth is to place people in an artificial stance of polar opposition and give them

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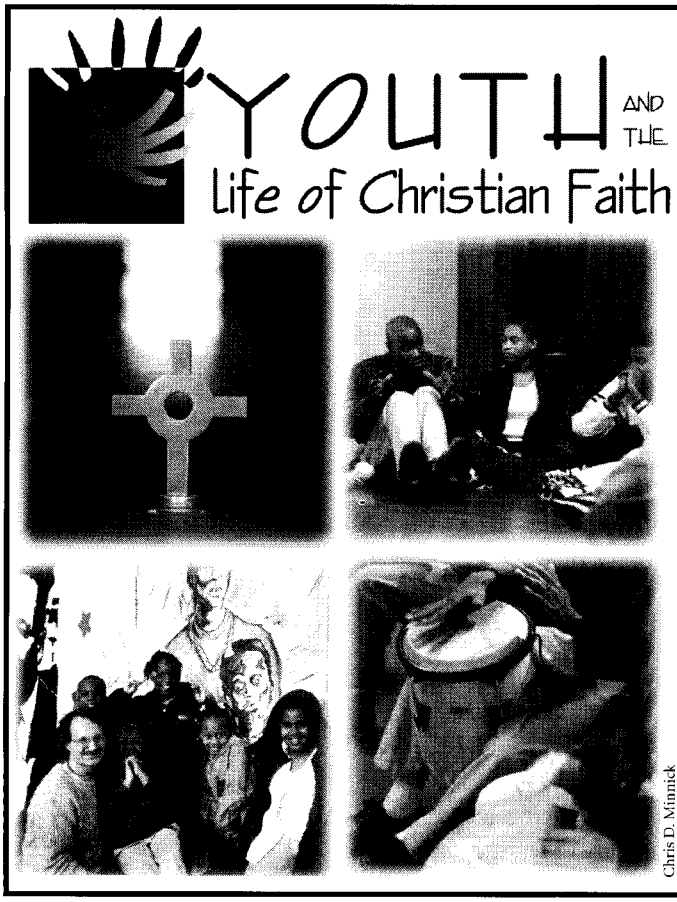
advocates who are ethically obliged by the concept of client confidentiality to *conceal* the truth. "Discovery" is the process whereby each side is permitted to request, and the other is bound to produce, all relevant information, and, while this was supposed to level the playing field and yield a measure of justice, the idea that lawyers were actually going to sift through the evidence and, *guided by the honor system*, deliver into the hands of the opponents the rope with which to hang their own client was ludicrous beyond all imagining. In practice, I learned, for instance, that you "prepare" a personal-injury plaintiff for deposition by asking: "The light was *red*? Are you sure the light was RED? Unless that light was *really* RED, it might look better for us if you don't say so tomorrow...."

The knowledge that I had ever believed The Law to be the heart *of how things worked* now filled me with the same anguish I'd experienced in the worst days of my drinking. On my lunch hour, I escaped the office and wandered to the residential streets west of Beaudry, desperate for a glimpse of something human: a plant on a balcony, a cat sitting in a window. Even my clothing felt oppressive: boa constrictor pantyhose and high heels, unfit for walking, that cruelly pinched after the first few steps. In a deserted park, I sat staring numbly at a patch of yellow lilies, as if trying to infuse myself with strength from their sunny petals and green leaves.

I carried with me always the secret of my alcoholism and the fear that it had rendered me permanently unfit for normal life. Why can't you be more grateful? I berated myself. Why can't you fit in like everyone else? Why are you always so depressed and drained and tormented? I had started to think of God almost constantly—I had even started praying—but there was still a gnawing void at the center of my life that I was ravenous to fill.

I would like to say my conversion began by reading the *Summa Theologiae* or Jacques Maritain or Etienne Gilson. Instead, one afternoon my secretary and ally Rose, a skinny Southern Baptist who lived on Mr. Goodbars and Fanta Orange, lent me a book by a man who had found religion after undergoing a terrible skiing accident. "In the midst of life's hurts you can choose joy!" one of the blurbs read. Luckily, I will read just about anything that is printed, especially if I can read it on company time. I was sitting in my office snorting at the *Reader's-Digesty* style when a quote in bold capitals from the book of Isaiah jumped out at me: I HAVE CALLED YOU BY NAME, YOU ARE MINE.

I can't describe the effect this sentence had on me. It was the kind of shock you might feel if you stepped out of the shower and looked into the face of a Peeping Tom, except it was not just my body laid bare, but my soul, too, my entire existence, including parts that were probably hidden even from me. I started at the beginning of the book and read



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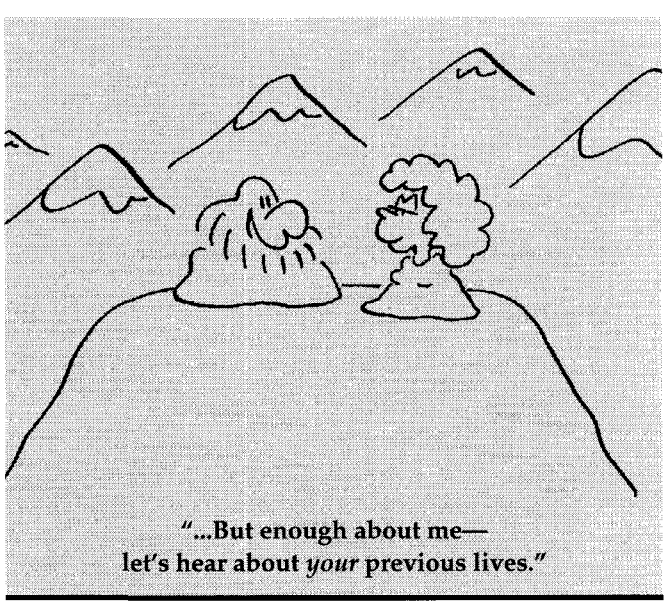
straight through. It was still a little "inspirational" for my taste, but there were passages from Auden and William Blake and the Psalms, and what I liked was that the author talked about the ambiguity and contradictions of life, the mystery of suffering. He did not talk about those things in the context of an amorphous cosmic spirituality, either. I had read plenty of books about spirituality; this guy was talking about Christ.

Next thing I knew I had started reading Thomas Merton, whose conversion actually *did* begin by reading Etienne Gilson. I read the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine, which I hadn't read since college twenty years earlier. I even, bit by bit, read the Gospels. This was a major capitulation. As far back as I could remember, I had—on sheer principle—thought and believed and done the opposite of anything my mother had thought or believed or done.

Ever since my forced childhood stint in Sunday school, I had associated the Gospels with stories about ancient men in dusty tunics. What struck me now, though, was how precisely they spoke to my situation, how precisely they explained, or at least began to explain, why I, and from what I could see, everyone else in the legal profession, was so deeply miserable. The Gospels talked about giving while the basic premise of the law was hoarding. They talked about letting go while the law advocated hanging on for all you were worth. They said to lay down your arms and I was in a world where all we ever did was gird ourselves for battle.

The world in which I worked was all about technical compliance with the law and stretching it as far as you possibly could, while Christ made clear that legal codes were only *beginnings*, not ends. The idea was to refrain not just from lying and stealing and killing, but from the hateful thoughts that are at the root of those actions: "You have heard the commandment imposed on your forefathers, `You shall not commit murder; every murderer will be liable to judgment.' What I say to you is: everyone who grows angry with his brother will be liable to judgment."



**"...But enough about me—
let's hear about *your* previous lives."**

Even in my untutored state, I sensed it was no accident that almost immediately following this passage about anger was a caveat about the dangers of lawsuits: "Lose no time; settle with your opponent while on your way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to the guard, who will throw you into prison. I warn you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny." Given the toll litigation took on plaintiffs, defendants, attorneys, and everyone else involved, it seemed to me that people were paying down to the last penny—even when they *won*.

Shortly after I'd started reading the Bible, we took on Mrs. Prietto as a client. Mrs. Prietto was a recently bereaved widow whose husband had died during outpatient podiatric surgery while she sat in the waiting room. She was bringing a wrongful death action against the hospital and several of its doctors. Frank dispatched me to "defend" her deposition against seven jackal-like insurance-company lawyers.

The "host," in whose twelfth-floor conference room we were gathered, was a paunchy man with a greasy red face who, without even bothering to introduce himself, sat down, loudly snapped what sounded like the pack of gum he was chewing, and started firing a volley of questions: *Did your husband have any hobbies? He played the guitar? What songs did he play? Where did he buy his strings? What was the name of the street the store was on? Were they plastic strings or steel? You don't know? How often did he practice? Less than three times a week, more than five? Which days? You don't know! How can we give you money for the death of a man you hardly knew?*

Just being present made me incandescent with shame and, in addition, I was so completely intimidated by the whole scenario—the overbearing interrogating attorney and the other silently smirking six—that I almost had a coronary every time I squeaked out a tentative objection. "Tell him to take the gum out of his mouth!" I instructed myself in panic. "Tell him to stop badgering the witness!" but my heart was knocking against my ribs so hard I could hardly breathe, much less speak.

As it turned out, Mrs. Prietto was almost a caricature of the perfect client, which only spurred on the opposing attorney. Her husband had been choir director at the Church of the Precious Blood; the lawyer rolled his eyes. She attended Mass every day; he heaved an exasperated sigh. She and her daughters went to the cemetery with flowers every weekend; the lawyer sneered and asked, "What did you do on your time *off*?"

"We were not extraordinary people, able to take expensive vacations," Mrs. Prietto replied in her lilting Spanish accent. "We usually went on retreats with different members of our congregation and..."

"Have you had any physical complaints since your husband died?" the lawyer interrupted.

"Physical complaints?" she replied, bewildered. "No, it

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is the little things I miss. Raking leaves together, painting the house, doing errands. He used to put gas in my car for me..."

"I'm *asking* you if you have any *physical* complaints," the attorney snarled. "Insomnia, stomach pain, backaches? Have you seen a doctor? Have you started taking any prescription medicines since your husband died?"

"I don't think you understand," Mrs. Prietto said softly, leaning in toward his tense, sweaty face. "When my husband died, it was like I had been sitting in a bright room and someone, without any warning, snapped the lights off. And they were *never going to come on again.*"

In the world of litigation almost everything you do or say or hear is calculated, but this was so real you could smell it: real sorrow, real grief, real love forever lost. You could have heard a pin drop; the interrogating lawyer even stopped snapping his gum. Simple, sincere, soft-spoken, Mrs. Prietto had managed to bring eight attorneys to their knees, had rendered us, finally, mute. In the silence, a phrase floated up from nowhere to the forefront of my mind: "But many who are first shall be last, and the last first." That was when I saw that Mrs. Prietto didn't need me. In some strange, reverse way, she had already won.

Just before I left my job, I apologized to Eric. It seemed to me that if blame were to be apportioned it would be along the lines of 99 percent his and 1 percent mine, but I had to admit that if he had been the world's biggest blowhard, backstabbing jackass, I had not always been a model of sisterly love. I thought for days about what I was going to say, reworking thousands of scenarios, saying to myself, "Okay, if he says *this*, I'm going to say *that*," and "If he refuses to talk to me, I'll just...."

In the end, I walked into his office, forced myself to meet his eyes, and said, "I know I haven't always been easy to get along with. I'm sorry for the times I was rude or uncommunicative." It just about killed me. I could scarcely believe, after the hideous wrongs he had perpetrated on me, that the words were coming from my mouth. But they were and, at that moment, they were as genuine as I could make them. True to form, he took it entirely as his due, puffing and preening in his usual way, and made not even the merest apology himself.

But when I walked back out his door, something had changed: some granite ledge inside me had been dynamited to smithereens. For three years, I had let him hold me in bondage and I wasn't in bondage anymore. It was like an exorcism: the most cataclysmic grant of inner freedom (apart from having been relieved of the compulsion to drink) that I have ever experienced.

I still support myself with occasional legal research and writing. There's something about law libraries that attracts misfits: grubby types with smudged-up notebooks. One unkempt guy with a yellowing beard sits all day at the library where I work, with his head bowed over a book whose pages he never turns. Another man with filthy clothes and wild hair spends hours filling legal pads with unintelligible squiggles. If only they turn enough tissue-thin pages, they must think, write down enough section and chapter and volume numbers, stare long enough at some fiendishly unintelligible index, some day they will finally stumble across it: the Rule Book, the code of behavior, how to be accepted and a part of the world instead of cast aside and lonely.

I know exactly how they feel: I am still trying to figure all that out, too. I am deeply grateful for the paradox that my law school education—conceived in ignorance, executed in darkness—now supports me while I "store up my treasure" and try to make my way as a writer. But I still wonder whether or not I have used my time on earth wisely. I will always instinctively side with almost any plaintiff over any corporate defendant, any employee over any employer, any member of a minority over any alleged bigot, but I do not delude myself these days that my legal work even remotely promotes the causes of racial harmony or sexual tolerance. I know too much about my own capacity for hatred, my own propensity to hold on to the compulsions and resentments that are killing me, to think that a lawsuit could heal such wounds—whether they are plaintiffs' wounds or defendants' wounds—in anyone else. Litigation does not seem to be working, has not managed to advance or increase our civil rights in any meaningful way, has not made us happier or more at peace with ourselves and our fellow man.

It sounds crazy, but could it be, I sometimes wonder, that given the parameters of the adversarial system, lawsuits *never* work, that force *never* sets the universe right in the long run, that each courtroom victory only inflates the winner with a subtle sense of the wrong kind of entitlement and fuels the loser with more hatred and rage? Could it be, as the novelist Amos Oz has theorized, that a sense of humor is the last bulwark against fanaticism, and that therefore the worst thing about the law really *is* that it has no sense of humor? Does William Rehnquist know any more about how the world really works than the wild-haired man writing squiggles on his legal pad all day?

Sitting in the library surrounded by my highlighters and Post-it notes and *Federal Reporters*, I don't have many answers. In the end, we are all like those people in my old torts textbook: the aunt who had the chair pulled out from beneath her without warning, the fat lady in the grocery store insulted for no good reason, the beautiful girl maimed by a faceful of lye. In the end, we go through life assaulted at random, blindsided by tragedy, stumbling through the dark nights and occasional lights of a mysterious world. We are good at finding people to blame, but the flashes of light, the rare moments of illuminating grace in which we are given to see that—losers, misfits, drunkards, weaklings—we are loved beyond all imagining anyway....Who, I keep wondering, is responsible for those moments?

"The light shines in darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." I know a little bit more now than I used to, but none of it has come from a law book. □

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GOD & MAN AT PREP SCHOOL

Can religion & elite education still mix?

Michael McGough

Shady Side Academy is the preeminent private school in Pittsburgh, long viewed by the parents of Ivy League-aspiring boys as a hometown alternative to the famous boarding schools of New England. Established in 1883 as a Christian school, it would have been so recognized as late as the 1960s, when the headmaster presided over chapel services of a palpably Protestant character.

Today, Shady Side is a different place, most obviously in being coeducational but also in its religious demographics. Thirty-five percent of the students at the school are Jewish and 35 percent Catholic, according to the president of the school, Peter Kountz, a Ph.D. in the history of culture from the University of Chicago, a Thomas Merton scholar, and the first Roman Catholic to head Shady Side.

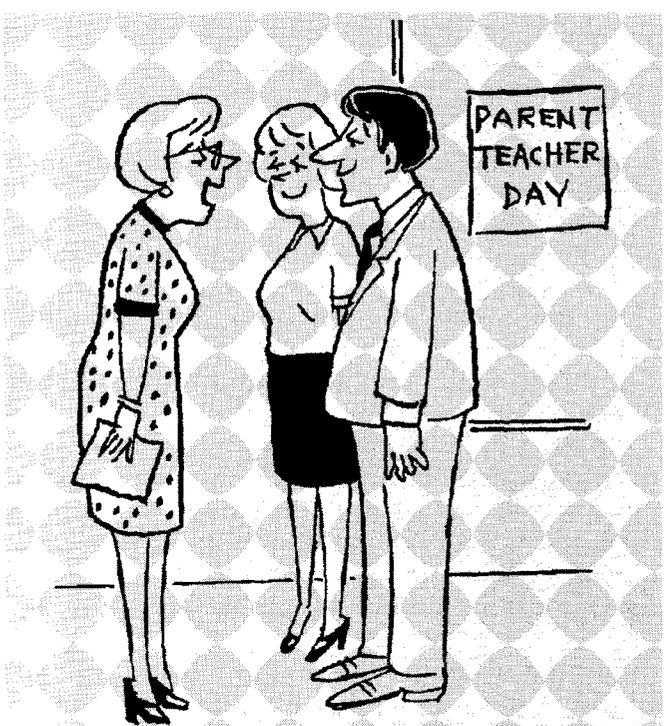
Unlike his Protestant predecessors, however, Kountz does not preside at chapel. There is no such thing. And that bothers him. "We're really lost without religion," says Kountz. "Shady Side should not, cannot, become a denominational school; that's fine. I can deal with that. But the fact that we don't have a way for our kids to find themselves spiritually, that's very ugly. More and more, schools have to pick up the slack that parents drop, but we can't do it completely if we don't have some sort of chaplaincy program."

After becoming Shady Side's president, Kountz decided to try to revive the chapel tradition. What he had in mind was not the old chapel service, with its overtones of Protestant privilege, but a program modeled on an arrangement at Wellesley College "where you have a director of chaplaincy services and then you have a chaplain for every world religion." The ethos would have been not Protestant or Catholic or Jewish but "truly ecumenical." Yet when Kountz floated the idea with school trustees, he recalls, the reaction was "remarkably unenthusiastic." To his dismay, some trustees worried that a chapel program would lead to Christian proselytizing. The idea was shelved.

The Shady Side saga speaks volumes about a little-noted corner of the continuing conversation in America about the relationship between education and religion. That debate has played out most conspicuously in the tiresome quarrels in Congress and the courts about prayer in public schools, but it resonates even in private schools to which the Supreme Court's writ does not run.

Many private (or, as they prefer to be known, independent) schools have abandoned mandatory chapel services, abolished the position of chaplain, and replaced muscular Christianity with multiculturalism. These days supporters of a religious dimension in private education are scrambling to justify the ways of God not to a secularist Supreme Court but to the schools' paying customers.

The irony is that many of these schools were founded on the rock of religion. In a 1996 essay in the *American Scholar* titled "The Strange Fate of the American Boarding School," David V. Hicks, the former rector at Saint Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire, recalled the days when the typical elite boarding school "profoundly adopted the Christian faith as its organizing principle. This provided ritual, cere-



"Your son excels in middle-class values."

Michael McGough *is editorial page editor of the* Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. *He has written about religion for the* New Republic, Slate.com, *the* American Spectator, *and the* New York Times. *In 1996–97 he served as writer in residence at the Haverford School near Philadelphia and at the Woodside Priory School in Portola Valley, California.*

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mony, and a coherent set of norms, although it seldom invited a confession of faith or inspired a conversion."

Even Hicks's restrained tribute to prep-school religion would strike some "old boys" as excessive. Tim Oppenheimer, a 1963 graduate of Shady Side Academy, recalls that chapel services were "something of a joke." When Oppenheimer and his wife were looking at schools for their children, he said, they were not interested in a school that "had much religious content or compulsion." It's a common attitude among parents of private-school pupils, and one that independent schools can't ignore. Just ask Peter W. Cobb.

Cobb is the executive director of CSEE, the Council for Spiritual and Ethical Education, an Atlanta-based organization that helps its 400 member schools, 26 of them Catholic, encourage spiritual development, the study of religion, and community service. Cobb notes that these days even at schools with denominational affiliations "their constituencies and families are comprised in many cases of people of different faith traditions and many, many families that are unobservant."

In response to such changes, Cobb says, schools replaced traditional religious vocabulary with political and psychological vocabularies—equality and tolerance on the one hand, and self-esteem on the other. Yet something was missing.

Cobb explains that independent schools have discovered that the "literacies" of politics and psychology "are incomplete in the absence of another vocabulary that speaks of things like righteousness, forgiveness, and charity...there is a different vocabulary that speaks to another dimension of human experience." That dimension may be especially important at schools that, even in this meritocratic era, are incubators of privilege.

So is religion making a comeback in independent schools? Yes and no. At some schools religious services are not only available but abundant. At Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, the schedule of voluntary religious services reads like the index to the *Encyclopedia of World Religions*. Students can commune with Catholic Exonians (about 10 percent of the student body), the Christian Fellowship, the Bahai Fellowship, the Exeter Society of Friends, the Hindu Society, the Islamic Society, and the Jewish Student Organization. But that spiritual smorgasbord is not the only—or perhaps the most important—contact Exeter students have with religion.

The school also offers sixteen religion classes covering all the major traditions, and, in the view of one longtime Exeter religion teacher, the classroom is key. Peter Vorkink, an Episcopal priest, is scornful of the "lowest-common-denominator ecumenism" that some school officials see as a way to be both religious and inclusive. In presenting religion to students, Vorkink says: "While I am in favor of school chaplaincy programs, if one has to pick where to have a religion requirement, I would personally go the classroom route rather than the required-chapel route."

Whether the venue is the classroom or the chapel, there is a movement to recover the religious heritage of private schools. But the restoration project is a complicated and contentious one. Witness the controversy over the very name of Peter Cobb's organization. Before 1998, CSEE was called CRIS—the Council for Religion in Independent Schools. The name was changed to do away with the R word. "CRIS, the acronym, certainly sounded Christian," Cobb recalls. "We recognized that the logo looked like a Bible. We also recognized that our schools were becoming increasingly secular as well as interfaith." Consequently, there was a "skittishness around the word religion....People saw that as connoting the doctrinaire, the dogmatic, the evangelical, the moralistic." Cobb adds that "since we changed our name our membership has gone up significantly." To which more conservative restorationists might ask, paraphrasing Jesus (Mark 8:36), "What doth it profit a school if it shall gain the whole world, and lose its own soul?"

To help students discover themselves spiritually, it seems to me, religion in schools must be normative—and "lowest-common-denominator ecumenism" isn't much of a norm.

David Hicks, now the head of the Darlington School in Rome, Georgia, wonders about the utility of replacing "religion" with "spiritual," considering the latter term's New Age overtones. Hicks acknowledges that in this "aggressively secular" era, "the country has bought into the notion that to bring up religion will offend people, that it's going to be a divisive topic." But in Hicks's experience such skittishness is unnecessary.

He cites an incident during his tenure as head of Saint Mark's School in Dallas. When it was proposed that the school build a new chapel, some Episcopalian trustees told Hicks that they worried that the plan would offend their Jewish friends on the board. But there was a twist to the tale. Hicks recalls: "Our chairman of the board, a Jew who had attended the school in the '60s, thanked them for their sensitivity and said that, for him and for other Jews on the board, the chapel was an important part of the school. As I recall, they all pledged generously to the campaign that included the chapel as its first item of business."

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Apostrophe

in memory 1999

!Your Easy Essays...
not easy—assays

mending the world's wrongs
in a mendicant's songs!

Hard as a hickory nut—
hard to rebut—

a switch of the hickory stick
in them, swipe quick

as your wit, gallic
(not to say *galactic*)
a soupçon of garlic

in a clove-like fist:
given a gentle twist

it opens up, green power
in the palm: love's flower.

Peter Maurin: May 1877–May 1949

John Fandel

The bygone boarding-school ideal Hicks described in his *American Scholar* essay still exists at some private schools, of course. Interestingly, many of these are not the Protestant academies of old but independent Roman Catholic schools with large numbers of non-Catholic pupils. Perhaps the most ecumenically minded Catholic independent schools are the twenty-one members of the Network of Sacred Heart Schools, and many Jesuit schools also have substantial non-Catholic enrollments.

In 1997, during a sabbatical from newspaper work, I taught at the Woodside Priory School in Portola Valley, California. The Benedictines, whose order founded the school, were vastly outnumbered on the faculty by lay teachers of all denominations. Indeed, the monks were such an exotic sight that the school's promotional materials explained that "new students often comment that at first it seems odd that a few of the teachers are guys in black robes."

Many of those new students were not Catholic. At the Priory, the student body's week began in the chapel, not with Catholic worship—though Masses were regularly celebrated there—but with a compulsory nondenominational program. Bleary-eyed as they often were, the students seemed to welcome chapel as more than a glorified assembly. It is an exquisite irony that some elite Catholic schools now play the role of exposing privileged students of all backgrounds to the "mere Christianity" (in C.S. Lewis's phrase) once preached from Protestant prep-school pulpits.

Peter Cobb of CSEE says of these Catholic independent schools that "people feel comfortable when folks are religiously declarative. The Catholic schools are not intent on converting non-Catholics to Catholicism; they are intent on living out their faith tradition. If people go to a Catholic school they have to acknowledge this. Most families are most comfortable when people are not always negotiating where they come down. We live in a culture of constant political, religious, and moral negotiation and I think it drives people up the wall." Or into the chapel.

Christopher Stoner, a recent Haverford College graduate from an Episcopal background, attended one of Woodside Priory's friendly rivals, the Sacred Heart Preparatory School in Atherton, California, where he found the yoke of Catholic education fairly easy. He recalls that "everyone was supposed to take religion classes each year, and even though they were taught from a Catholic point of view, it didn't really feel like anyone was trying to convert non-Catholics."

Stoner, who went into teaching himself, adds: "I felt a little strange for receiving an award during my senior year for helping out with the liturgy ceremonies so much. I had selected a lot of the poetry and music for the ceremonies that year, yet I am not Catholic, and at the time I was agnostic at best. Even with a monthly Mass I didn't feel encouraged to live a Catholic life. But I think part of it did really have an effect on me. I really was happy that they required us to do a hundred hours of community service before we could graduate. Even though that is very important to the Catholic faith, I think I saw the good in it for different reasons, not attached to spirituality."

The restorationists would beg to differ, and so would I. Spirituality is precisely what distinguishes schools like Sacred Heart, Woodside Priory, and a few traditionalist Protestant academies from schools where community service is not grounded in a religious norm. And there is the rub. To help students discover themselves spiritually, it seems to me, religion in schools must be normative—and "lowest-common-denominator ecumenism" isn't much of a norm.

Does that mean that prestigious private schools must choose between two missions that in the beginning were mutually compatible but now are at war: preserving their Christian identity and providing a diverse student body (that increasingly includes not only Jews and unbelievers but also Muslims) with a safe passage to Harvard and Yale? Not necessarily. In an era in which Ivy League and other elite colleges draw most of their talented students not from prep schools but from first-rate public schools, one could argue that prep schools have been liberated from their perceived obligation to be inclusive at all costs and are now free to be as "religiously declarative" as Catholic independent schools. However, the transformation of CRIS to CSEE suggests that not many of these schools will seize that opportunity. □

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Rand Richards Cooper

COMMITTED

'American Psycho' & 'High Fidelity'

American Psycho opens with a gorgeous protagonist taking a slow, luxurious shower. Feeling queasy? Well, don't worry about a knife tearing the shower curtain: this is eighties New York, not fifties Southern Gothic, and the monster is *inside* the shower. Meet Norman Ba—oops, Patrick Bateman, a twenty-seven-year-old investment banker who keeps his bathroom stocked with an impressive array of soaps, exfoliants, and other beauty products. He's going to need them all, too, since by midmovie he's sluicing away enough out-out-damned-spots to incarnadine the entire Manhattan sewer system.

Brett Easton Ellis's notorious 1991 novel took those two staples of 1980s lore, the Wall Street killer and the serial murderer, and bundled them into one buff, swaggering, Brioni-suited package of mayhem and rage. *American Psycho* sparked widespread revulsion for its violent misogyny, but the novel's real crime, with its lurid splatterfests and endless catalogs of brand-name products, was to pummel the reader into the same stuporous frenzy that afflicted its protagonist. You wanted to slash and slash.

Director Mary Harron (*I Shot Andy Warhol*) and her co-writer, Guinevere Turner, have done just that, carving out of Ellis's mountain of pop trash a quick, jagged film. Bateman is played by Christian Bale, who resembles a young James Brolin—your memories of "Marcus Welby" are in for a ghoulish new tilt—and hunches behind a mannequin-like smile, blurting murderous impulses under his breath. He hangs out in trendy bars with his fellow Wall Street young Turks, whom he hates and envies, and trades icy pleasantries with his fiancée (Reese Witherspoon). When he's dissed by a brash competitor who not only pulls off bigger deals, but gets last-minute tables at top restaurants, *and* keeps mistaking Bateman for someone else—well, how much is a raging narcissist supposed to take? Heads begin to roll, literally.

American Psycho isn't easy to watch, and not just because of the violence. Harron and her cinematographer, Andrzej Sekula, have created a glossy, distorted look that keeps us at a distance, partly by bringing us in too close. (Especially to faces—closer than you want to be to Bale's pretty mask, and *much* closer to the leering jack o'lantern of Willem Dafoe, playing a Columbo-style detective.) With its stilted dialogue, disjointed pacing, and notably flat affect, *American Psycho* has the feel of a personality disorder. It's as if Harron has infused Bateman's narcissism into the texture of the film, portraying identity as a series of poses and empty lines.

The movie wobbles between darkly comic Grand Guignol and a cold outrage at American excess. The former impulse is the better one. Harron tosses off genre riffs, from chainsaw massacre to mean-streets gumshoe to porn, and campy *double entendres*, as during Bateman's date with his sweetly adoring secretary ("I'm afraid I'll hurt you," he says, and she: "I don't want to be bruised"). During the opening credits, drops of what looks like blood falling against a white background turn out to be red berry *coulis* drizzled onto a dinner plate. Later, when Bateman lures a victim back to his apartment—its walls gleaming white, chairs slipcovered, newspapers taped to the floor like a huge napkin—we know some major *coulis* is about to be spilled.

Such ghastly wit has a life of its own, well beyond the film's ideas, which are banal. It's hardly a dazzling insight, for instance, to locate a kernel of Social Darwinism inside a career like Bateman's; maybe that's why having him murder a homeless man ("You're a loser!" he rants, stabbing him) comes off as, well, overkill. Harron and Turner can't decide whether this is satire, merrily gruesome allegorical farce, or the nightmare of a man trapped in his own violent delusion. (As the bodies pile up, we're served hints that it's all a lurid fantasy in Bateman's mind.) The film hedges its bets, manipulating its surfaces—appropriately enough—in an attempt to have it all. It's a letdown when black comedy yields to psychological tension. Then again, *American Psycho* is a period piece; and as Bateman self-destructs, whining and blubbering about what a bad boy he has been, perhaps we can feel the '80s obsession morphing into the '90s. Good-bye nasty monster of greed, hello inner child!

Who's psycho?

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If *American Psycho* sounds like something you'd loathe, then you may just love *High Fidelity*, Stephen Frears's warmly funny account of what passes for life in a retro Chicago record store called Championship Vinyl. John Cusack stars as Rob Gordon, the store's thirty-something owner, who's frittering his days away with his two hapless employees, Barry and Dick. Together they're the Three Stooges of retail music, babbling about obscure bands, flaying their few customers with arcane expertise, and doing pitched battle over who recorded the best version of "Little Latin Lupe Lu." Needless to say, this record-geek fanaticism bodes ill for romance—how well can you be doing with women if you're this ardent about Licorice Confidence's new Japan import? When Rob gets dumped by his girlfriend Laura (the serenely beautiful Iben Hjejle), he quests into his past, revisiting his list of Top Five Breakups to figure out why his love life always hits those same old clunker notes.

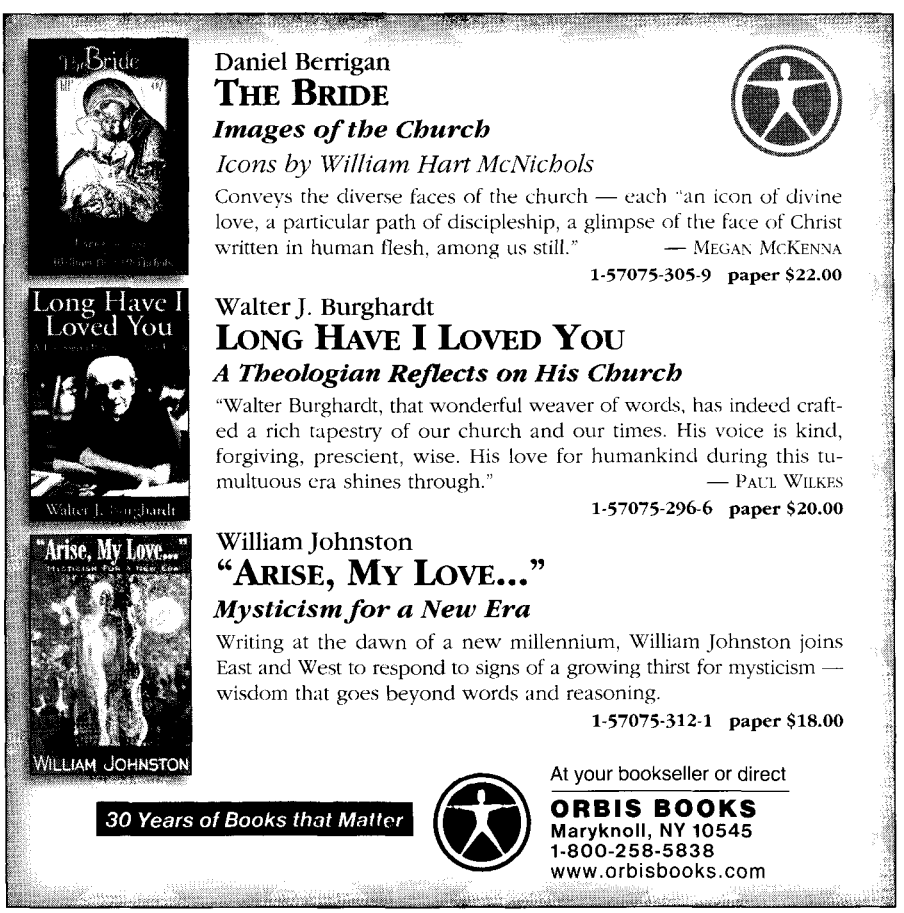
Frears has given British writer Nick Hornby's novel a transatlantic change of venue, leaving Cusack to pull off an American version of London grunge. In rumpled black jeans, belted black leather jacket, and sneakers, he's a buffoon bohemian, looking weirdly like Stallone in the original *Rocky*—an amiable loser loafing through the city. His life, like his apartment and store, is grimy, cluttered and stale, and he's comfortable in it, loving nothing more than to sit back with a cigarette and bemoan his misery. *High Fidelity* must set a new mark for smashing the cinematic fourth wall; Cusack turns away from phone calls, from funerals and bedroom conquests, to pour his troubles directly into the camera. Are we his friend? His confessor? His shrink? At least we know we matter.

While *American Psycho* does its best to appall, *High Fidelity* aims to please, and please it does, a bit too eagerly, but effectively nonetheless. There's raucous fun with the store clerks (Jack Black is priceless as Barry, goateed and belligerent, berating a customer who wants to buy "I Just Called to Say I Love You"). The movie's soundtrack delivers jokey touches—swooning into Barry White as Rob visualizes Laura sleeping with her new boyfriend (Tim Robbins, in a silly cameo), then later bursting into Queen's "We Are the Champions" when he euphorically finds out she hasn't (yet). And Cusack's real-life sister Joan shows up as his screen sister, reaming him out for losing Laura, thus completing the comic picture of a sad sack so unlucky in love that when his girlfriend splits, his family sides with *her*.

Fans of other Frears films, like *My Beautiful Launderette* or *The Snapper*, may miss a certain edge in all this. Those movies pushed back at you from a core of perhaps-not-solvable human problems; while *High Fidelity* gestures at such complexities, this is romantic comedy, and the bottom line is all fluff and forgiveness. Cusack does this stuff almost too well. His breakthrough in Cameron Crowe's 1989 teen romance, *Say Anything*, disclosed a bankable asset that directors have been cashing in ever since—namely, the Suffering Lover, a.k.a. the Man Who Stands Outside in the Rain. Frears subjects him to repeated dousings; and by film's end, when he towels him off to deliver a soulful Top Five Things I Miss about Laura ("I miss her smell, and the way she tastes..."), the theater murmurs with sighing women.

Ultimately, Rob's trip down the romantic dead-ends of his past delivers the scratchy truth that he has been the dumper as often as the dumped—perpetually restless, unable to commit. "I guess it made more sense to keep my options open," he confesses, "and that's suicide by tiny tiny increments." Bidding adieu to his extended adolescence, he embraces good old-fashioned maturity, trading in those empty old romantic fantasies for love and commitment. *High Fidelity* frees Cusack from the dictatorship of the inner child and positions him for a liberating discovery of the outer adult, ready for marriage and raring to go.

Maybe now he'll even get to wear a raincoat. □



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Margaret O'Brien Steinfels

VIRGINS NO MORE

What Saatchi's 'Sensation' really exposed

The Virgin festooned with pornographic photos and elephant dung has come and gone. But her apparition in the Brooklyn Museum of Art left behind disquieting information, not about religion and art, but about art and money and the smug arrogance of an art world ready to offend but surprisingly unreceptive to being offended itself.

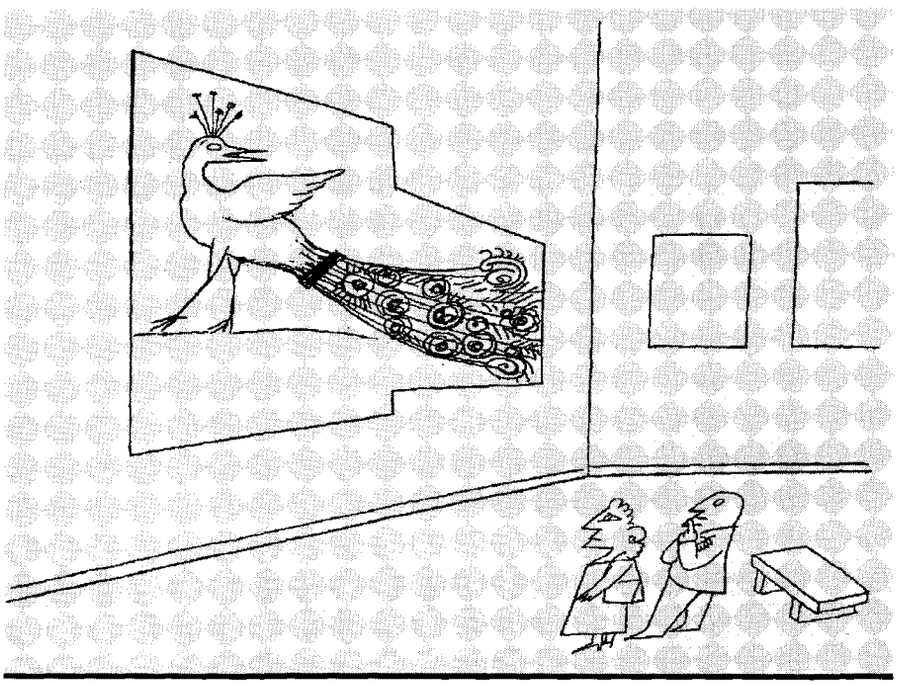
Last fall, New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani demanded that the picture, *The Holy Virgin Mary* by British artist Chris Ofili, be removed from the "Sensation" exhibit because it was offensive to Catholics. When the Brooklyn Museum director, Arnold Lehman, failed to oblige, the mayor withheld city subsidies. In March the dispute between city and museum was finally settled in federal court. The city agreed to pay all it owed the museum ($3.5 million); in return, the museum dropped its First Amendment case against the mayor. The battle of Brooklyn may be over, but the war over tax funds for controversial art is not.

For many New Yorkers the controversy was not a fight about tax funds or the First Amendment, but a form of political theater. Both Lehman and Giuliani are showmen who know that nothing entertains the citizenry more than a dispute that appears to shake the foundations of constitutional order and deeply offends religious sensibilities. *The Holy Virgin Mary* was arguably not the most offensive offering at the exhibit (that award could have gone to the Chapman brothers for their child mannequins deployed in various sexual poses with human genitalia as part of their facial features; in London, it was a portrait, made up of children's hand prints, of "Myra," a child torturer and murderer). But for Director Lehman it made little difference which work was found transgressive just so long as one of them was. What use is an exhibit named "Sensation" if it does not cause one? His marketing of the exhibit—broadsides promising vomiting, fainting, etc.—was meant to repulse, and thus attract, as many viewers as possible. It was his great good luck that it was the mayor who was offended.

Lehman and Giuliani, along with William Donohue of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights and Floyd Abrams, the First Amendment lawyer who orchestrated the museum's case and defended it in court, are master polemicists who enjoy a good fight. They royally entertained New Yorkers until the show closed in early January.

But for all the fireworks, it has come to look like a win-win situation for everyone. Museum admissions skyrocketed. The Catholic League found some new members and garnered more publicity. Lawyer Abrams won his case in court. And today, Rudolph Giuliani brags in senatorial campaign literature about his courageous stand, promising, if elected, to scrutinize federal art funding. But best of all, shortly before the show closed a seventy-two-year-old retiree and devout Catholic, Dennis Heiner, threw white paint on Ofili's picture. Not only was this a fitting finale, it was a bona fide certification that this was really, really art. Jed Perl, writing about the Whitney 2000 Biennial in the *New Republic* (April 3, 2000), made the point neatly: "Once art provoked controversy. Now it seems that controversy can give anything the aura of art. Andres Serrano, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Ofili are nothing without their controversies; that's what gives their work meaning." Objecting strenuously to Heiner's sensational defacement, museum staff quickly removed the offending white paint and returned the picture to its owner, Charles Saatchi, as offensive as when it arrived and certainly more valuable.

But the story does not end there. When the museum went to court, it was obliged to reveal the exhibit's financial and artistic arrangements. Memos and e-mail between Lehman, museum curators, and Saatchi exposed the extensive control—financial and artistic—exercised by Saatchi, the man who owned all the works in the show. In addition, financial contributions were solicited and received from Christie's, the art auction house, and



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various gallery owners, who, like Saatchi, would directly benefit from future sales of the artists represented in "Sensation." Was there a conflict of interest in the museum's showing of Saatchi's collection and taking money from him? In allowing him a significant role in mounting the exhibit, did the museum surrender its autonomy and artistic integrity? If the museum is in the same business as profit-making galleries, why should taxpayers help fund it?

Pretty shocking! I certainly thought so as I read the detailed account by *New York Times* reporter David Barstow (December 6, 1999) showing how and where ethical lines were crossed by the museum and its director. The museum's aesthetic and educational mission was subverted in favor of the financial interests of collectors and dealers. But we who were shocked turn out to be naifs, people who don't understand that the business of art is, well, business.

Exactly how much business was expansively explored at a conference organized by the University of Chicago and the Art Institute of Chicago in February, "Taking Funds, Giving Offense, Making Money: The Brooklyn Museum of Art Controversy and the Dilemmas of Arts Policy" (a title Lehman found offensive). Many audience members of the "arts community" in Chicago expressed astonishment at the astonishment of the citizenry. Like all little enclaves, especially ones that lay claim to specialized knowledge, the art world is a mystery to the general public, which has little opportunity to understand its inner workings. Art is not licensed or regulated; it is not sued for malpractice; the press rarely scrutinizes its practices. Its practitioners—rich and newly rich collectors, dealers, museum directors, and curators—cultivate an air of exclusiveness, and, at times, of sanctity and Gnosticism. Such is their insularity except when tax funds are needed; then there is talk, as at the Chicago meeting, of educating a benighted public too ignorant to recognize great (and valuable) art.

Still, not even the cognoscenti are always aware of the financial arrangements like those at the Brooklyn Museum or the commercial deals that some museums make, for example, in taking commission for a work sold as the result of an exhibition. Gilbert Edelson, vice president of the genuinely for-profit Art Dealers Association of America, dropped the latter news in a panel discussion and truly seemed to shock the directors of the two academic museums, Chicago and Harvard, on the panel. But other curators readily acknowledged the power of collectors over the decisions museums make about exhibits and their content, and seemed indifferent to the ethical lines that the public assumes separate aesthetic judgment and commercial calculation.

The panel of lawyers offered more practical and political counsel: Constantly defending trangressive art by recourse to the First Amendment, though an argument likely to win in court, was a strategy with diminishing returns. David Strauss of the University of Chicago Law School put it this way: "The battle over government funding of disturbing or unconventional art is going to have to be won in the court of public opinion, not in courts of law enforcing the First Amendment. People who want to resist government efforts to reduce funding of certain kinds of art will have to persuade their fellow citizens why it is important that such funding continue." The courts have declared that once a government body provides funds, it cannot withdraw them to censor offensive art. But no more than newspapers or book publishers are art museums entitled to tax funds. The bottom line: If government bodies cannot censor art, they are free to decide not to fund art at all. The congressional budget cutting at the National Endowment for the Arts following the Mapplethorpe controversy was never far from this discussion.

The Chicago conference, though less colorful than the New York controversy, was more illuminating. It took the dilemma of public tolerance and funding for transgressive art seriously. There were few, if any, defenders of Rudolph Giuliani, but Arnold Lehman had no champions either. There were deep uneasiness with the financial arrangements made by the Brooklyn Museum and serious doubts raised by its legal strategy. This was an audience that clearly understood how dependent most arts institutions are on tax funds and public generosity. The Charles Saatchis of this world will not support museums, except when it is in their own interests. But in a perverse way, there appears to be more respect in the art world for the tastes and judgments of a Saatchi than for the public's. Or is it just for his investment policy?

Back in New York, the court case is over, but there remains, at least, one unanswered question. What were Mayor Giuliani's motives in waging war on behalf of the Madonna? Was he truly offended by the Ofili picture or was his protest a play for the Catholic and conservative vote in the coming senatorial election? My liberal Catholic friends who saw the show (I did not) insist that Ofili's picture was "lyrical." They think that the mayor is a bully and/or a philistine and that the Catholic League lacks subtlety in its many campaigns against "Catholic bashing." I usually agree with them. But in this case, I think liberal Catholics may be wrong, and the mayor (and the Catholic League) are probably right. The Ofili picture is pornographic, as even a cursory examination of the catalog illustration shows. All the focus on the elephant dung (and the pretentious gloss on Ofili's African roots)—partly encouraged by the museum's advance publicity—allowed reporters and the public to overlook the cutouts surrounding the Virgin. Though shaped to look like angel wings, in fact, they are photos of female genitalia from behind and below—the kind featured in pornographic magazines and on little stickers pasted in phone booths, inviting customers to call for a good time.

The picture may look lyrical from a distance but it strikes me as pornographic kitsch embodying the oldest stereotypes of women, the virgin and the whore. Ofili is lucky that it was only the mayor who attacked his picture and not the feminist brigade, which should have been even more offended than Catholics. But that's another piece of political theater. □

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels *is editor of* Commonweal.

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Missing: The vision thing

Eugene McCarraher

The spiritual fatigue that haunts America's current prosperity is the chief occasion for these books on hope. We are witnessing, they argue, the death of an American capacity for social hope: the withering of passion for what the populists once called a "cooperative commonwealth," the erosion of any willingness to envision a community that is more just, more free, and even beloved.

Clear away the gargantuan material abundance of our time, our authors suggest, and you find a hopeless spiritual condition. As Andrew Delbanco puts it in *The Real American Dream*, Americans find it increasingly hard to conjure up "any conception of a common destiny worth tears, sacrifice, and maybe even death." In its utopian quest for a free global market, capital has done more than gag unions, repeal regulations, and mock restrictions on accumulation and consumption. The world of money has worn down the power of imaginative resistance. The hope for a beloved community, now consigned to that lotus-bin called "the sixties," gives way to the hipness that is the official culture of infotainment capitalism.

The dilapidation of our social and political hope is evident everywhere. Delbanco documents the relentless privatization of middle-class life, "the impoverishment of our children's capacity to imagine the future," and the corporate colonization of our leisure and fantasy. Roberto Unger and Cornel West note the political disenchantment of college youth and the conceptual bankruptcy of a North Atlantic Left. And Richard Rorty—whose work has been vilified by the Left and the Right as an apologia for amorality and insouciance—writes of our Second Gilded Age with eloquent outrage. "The fact that people are now willing to cross picket lines, and are unwilling to ask who makes their clothes or picks their vegetables, is a symptom of moral decline," he asserts in *Philosophy and Social Hope*. Like an urbane and secular Jonathan Edwards, Rorty sermonizes that the nation once heralded as the container of multitudes, the "vanguard of a global egalitarian utopia," is "in danger of losing its soul."

Books discussed in this essay

The Real American Dream
A Meditation on Hope
by Andrew Delbanco
Harvard University Press, $19.95, 143 pp.

Philosophy and Social Hope
by Richard Rorty
Penguin, $13.95, 288 pp.

Achieving Our Country
Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America
by Richard Rorty
Harvard University Press, $12.95, 176 pp.

The Future of American Progressivism
by Roberto Mangebeira Unger and Cornel West
Beacon Press, $12, 93 pp.

It is to save the nation's soul that the authors seek out American traditions of social progress for inspiration and extension. Delbanco's intellectual and moral authority grows out of his work on the Puritans and especially *The Death of Satan* (1996), one of the finest accounts of evil and its vicissitudes in American culture. Shifting his sight here from sin to redemption, Delbanco sets out to interpret "the real American dream," a spiritual ideal gradually obscured by a consumerist facsimile. Delbanco's "meditation"—one he concedes is a story of hope's "diminution"—follows the American quest for self-realization through "God," "Nation," and "Self." In the first phase, exemplified by the Puritans, hope for the self lay in what one divine called "a holy despair in ourselves" that led, through humility, submission, and love of neighbor to transcendence in God. This Christian conception could not, however, survive the solvents of wealth and the blows of the Enlightenment, and by the nineteenth century a new narrative of hope, forged in Revolutionary nationalism and constructed around the ideal of "citizenship in a sacred union," had partially supplanted the religious account.

This civic republican ideal of "nation" animated Tocqueville, Emerson, Whitman, Melville, and Lincoln, all of whom believed that the possibilities of the self could be realized in an expansive and energetic democracy. But in the process of inspiring economic development and political reform, national aspirations also revealed a lethal ruthlessness. Melville's work especially unveiled "the dirty little secret of the new national religion—the fact that the ebullient democracy was also a killing machine." The ideal of "nation" that galvanized Progressivism, the New Deal, and the Great Society could also sanction slavery, racial segregation, and the imperialism that slaughtered Native Americans, Filipinos, and Vietnamese.

In recent decades the American quest for self turned increasingly inward. Though Delbanco's history gets pretty facile at this point, the key culprits in the current narcissism seem to be consumerism and the erosion of faith in public institutions occasioned by the Vietnam War. Unwilling to end his meditation on so downbeat a note, Delbanco

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hastens to observe that "the most striking feature of contemporary culture is the unslaked craving for transcendence," and that "Christianity and civil religion," though weakened, "remain the bedrock of our culture."

Delbanco's God is thoroughly Protestant and even more thoroughly Puritan, as are his models (Edwards, Winthrop) of religious cultural criticism. By persisting in the Protestant parochialism that still deforms American intellectual history, Delbanco, like Christopher Lasch in *The True and Only Heaven* (1991), limits the intellectual and imaginative resources on which we could draw for social hope. Likewise, Delbanco's Emersonian watch seems all too aestheticized and reminiscent of postwar liberal intellectual culture, where the gray-flanneled *gravitas* of a Reinhold Niebuhr did more to paralyze than electrify social hope.

In contrast to Delbanco, Unger and West (Harvard professors and renowned social theorists and political activists) want more action. Noting shrewdly that hope is "more the consequence of action than its cause," and appealing to what they call the American "religion of possibility"—an abiding triune faith in democracy, practicality, and the power of individuals to improve their lives—they offer guidelines for a refurbishment of the progressive tradition born in the first decades of this century. Among their sweeping but sensible proposals are: full public financing of campaigns (a more thorough reconstruction than the timid McCain-Feingold reforms); "social endowment accounts" on which individuals could draw for education, housing, or entrepreneurial ventures; and the reorganization of Social Security into a social investment fund.

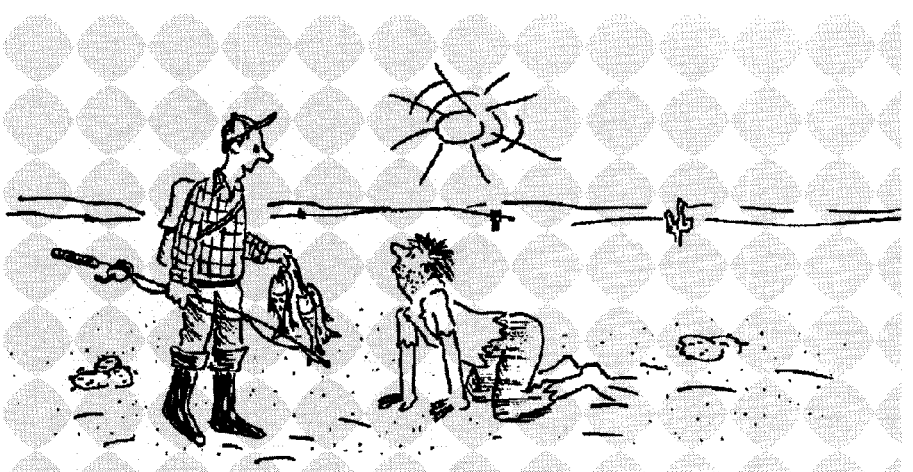
By describing as "religion" the practical and experimental ways in which Americans approach technology and personal relations, Unger and West highlight the mixture of prophecy and wonkery that has been the glory and the bane of the progressive tradition. They marvel at "a worldwide network of productive vanguards," at "flexibility" and "decentralization" in labor markets and production, and at the "flattened hierarchies," "fluid job definitions," and "constant reshaping of products, services, and practices" that characterize the advanced sectors of contemporary capitalism. But *The Future of American Progressivism* seems unaware of the ways this lexicon articulates the libertarian elitism of the "productive vanguards."

Of course flexibility, decentralization, and egalitarianism are virtues, not vices. But what sort of "deep democracy" is it (West has a habit of falling for all things "deep") that allows a handful of *Wunderkinder*, however "socially conscious," to determine how "fluid" and "flexible" the rest of us will be? For a couple of leftists, the authors are remarkably forgetful of the market's coercive character. If the market is to be "democratized," shouldn't the resources now monopolized by the lap-topocracy be the property of all?

Rorty apparently thinks so, and that lends his own reflections on hope a freshness lacking in the others. Blending Delbanco's national ideal with the utopianism of nineteenth-century Europe—"the noblest imaginative creation of which we have record"—Rorty's social hope both outshines Delbanco's melancholia and quickens the blood more readily than the decaffeinated progressivism of Unger and West. If Delbanco, Unger, and West offer Americans either smoldering embers or a cut of the profits, Rorty wants them to have it all: the "worker ownership" and "union control of the workplace" ideals of anarchism and syndicalism; the "industrial democracy" and "guild socialism" of the 1910s; the "self-management" demands of 1968, as well as other decentralist roads not taken.

To achieve these utopian hopes, Rorty calls for a revitalized American Left that speaks loudly about the malefactors of great wealth, wages unashamed class warfare, and revives the romance of faith in human possibility, under what he calls "civil religion." In both of his books, Rorty excoriates the academic Left for its immersion in the exotic pedantry of postmodernism, its marination in the "identity politics" of race, sexuality, and gender, its eschewal of class politics, and its contempt for patriotism. "You can feel shame over your country's behavior," he writes in *Philosophy and Social Hope*, "only to the extent to which you feel it is your country. If we fail in national hope, we shall no longer even try to change our ways."

Still, while Rorty argues that this leftist patriotism will eventually "achieve our country" (a phrase he borrows from James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*), his putative popular front of democratic bards (Walt Whitman), pragmatist philosophers (John Dewey and William James), and the labor-union movement isn't always the radically democratic vista he imagines. Rorty contends that solutions to economic, population, and ecological problems will require "top-down, technobureaucratic initiatives," an assertion he illustrates infelicitously with China's one-child-per-family policy. Rorty's benevolent tech-



"That's the difference between me and you. I have a positive attitude."

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nocrats sound a lot like Unger and West's productive vanguards. Neither his nor theirs can be counted on to welcome decentralized workers' control.

Rorty's description of his labor-left nationalism as a "civic religion" points to the religious concerns that animate his social hope. Not that Rorty would see it that way. In *Achieving Our Country*, he identifies sin with "self-loathing," while in *Philosophy and Social Hope* he complains that belief in otherworldly salvation releases Christians from this-worldly efforts to alleviate suffering. These are ridiculous misrepresentations, and the maternal grandson of Walter Rauschenbusch ought to know better. But Rorty atones with some uncharacteristically sympathetic observations about Christianity that all of us should take to heart. In a wonderful essay titled "Looking Backwards from the Year 2096," he cheers that the "social-gospel theology of the early twentieth century has been rediscovered." He sees (without a trace of awareness that he was beaten to the analogy by Dorothy Day) that "Christian congregations meeting in catacombs" were like unto "workers' rallies in city squares." Elsewhere, he dreams of the day when our descendants "will think of Saint Agnes and Rosa Luxemburg, Saint Francis and Eugene Debs, Father Damien and Jean Jaures, as members of a single movement."

This enlistment of saints in the long march of hope highlights both the central quandary of Rorty's vision and the challenge he poses to the Christian social imagination. Rorty wants to live off the moral interest of the faith without tending to the metaphysical principle. In *Achieving Our Country*, he argues that a hope-bearing civil religion must separate the "fraternity and loving kindness" enjoined by the gospel from "the idea of supernatural parentage, immortality, and providence." Rorty justifies this separation in *Philosophy and Social Hope* by invoking the pragmatist repudiation of metaphysics authorized by Dewey and James.

But the insufficiency of pragmatism as a basis for political hope and action was best explained long ago by Randolph Bourne, who noted the alacrity with which Dewey and his band of instrumentalists marched to the beat of the war drums in 1917. A nice enough philosophy for nice people like Dewey, Bourne wrote, pragmatism buckled when faced with avarice, bloodlust, and the "new tastes for power that are springing up like poisonous mushrooms on every hand." Besides, while Dewey recurred to "values" (just as Rorty goes on about "kindness" and "humanitarianism"), there was, Bourne mordantly remarked, "that unhappy ambiguity" as to "just how values were created."

The futility of pragmatism as a basis for social hope lay, in other words, in its inability to do what Rorty himself concedes only religion does: hold "reality and justice in a single vision." A religious and specifically Christian appeal to social hope grounds its demands in metaphysics: that is, in a belief that creation is good because a God who is love has crafted an "ontology of peace," as John Milbank has put it so well, wherein love is not an ideal but the most lucid and penetrating realism.

And that is why the vigor and generosity of Rorty's social hope witnesses against much of the Christian social imagination of our time: mush about "compassion" and "social justice," proposals to "mitigate" the brutalities of the market. We who know that our faith is the hope and not the conscience of a world in the grip of mammon should be scandalized by this degeneration. We must reclaim our own history of hope, compose our own account of possibility, and declare that our dreams comport with the moral and metaphysical architecture of creation. Redemption is the grandest, most realistic, and most political hope of all. □

Eugene McCarraher *teaches humanities at Villanova University and American history at the University of Delaware. His book,* Christian Critics: Religion and the Impasse in Modern American Social Thought, *has just been published by Cornell University Press.*

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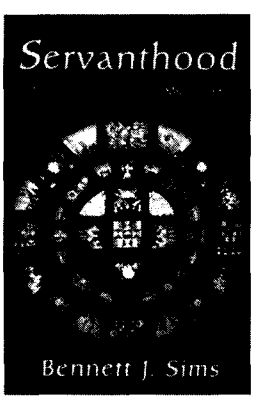

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The Mysterious Flame
Conscious Minds in a Material World
Colin McGinn
Basic Books, $24, 242 pp.

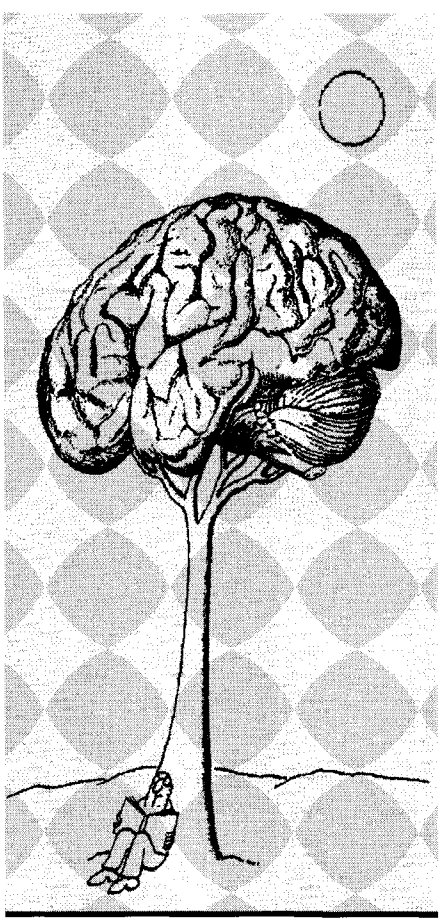
Bernard G. Prusak

The nineties were to consciousness what the sixties were to sex, according to philosopher Colin McGinn. If sex was on the brain then, more recently the hot topic has been "mind"—or, more precisely, how the brain gives rise to the mind.

Written in a style lightened by wit and not burdened by jargon, *The Mysterious Flame* is a fascinating read from beginning to end. McGinn does what the best philosophy has always done: make us wonder at how strange the world is. McGinn's question is what sense we are to make of "the fact of consciousness," "the having of sensations, emotions, feelings, thoughts." He has written several technical treatments of this topic but here presents both the problems and his positions in a popular idiom. This book may not tell you everything you wanted to know about consciousness but were afraid to ask; but it is difficult to imagine a more pleasurable way of being initiated into the current debate about the mind.

To begin with, the philosophy of mind, as it is called, is on the whole resolutely naturalistic, which may be why it is little represented at Catholic universities but thrives at institutions like M.I.T. Consciousness studies takes its bearings from what McGinn calls the "secular scientific view of the universe," and has been given much of its excitement and urgency from the advancement in brain sciences over the past twenty years. In that context, the brain has often been referred to as "meat." The problem, as McGinn puts it, is "How does mere meat turn itself into conscious awareness?" Going on and on about the brain's complexity only begs this question, which fundamentally is how sentience comes from matter, however complex. The fact is that consciousness—this pulsing throbbing with which all creation groans—is strange, strange stuff, and it is not at all evident how to square it with a strictly materialistic scientific world-picture.

McGinn discusses, and rather quickly rejects, both materialism and dualism. Materialists argue that "there is nothing more to the mind than the brain as currently conceived"; dualists that "there is no possibility of reducing the mind to the brain, because they are separate realms." The problem with materialism is that "there is a deep logical gap between neurons and experiences." Knowing everything there is to know about how the brain works—how its raw materials ignite the flame of consciousness—teaches us nothing about what we actually sense or suffer or feel or think. "Even hi-tech instruments like PET scans," McGinn observes, "only give us the physical basis of consciousness, not consciousness as it exists for the person whose consciousness it is." Correlatively, the problem with dualism is that "it cuts the mind off too radically from the brain," resulting in both phenomenological embarrassment and conceptual incoherence. To put this another way, mind-body dualism is contradicted by the everyday facts of experience. Knock your head against a wall if you wish to ascertain the unity of brain and mind.



Most of *The Mysterious Flame* presents McGinn's own solution to these problems, what he calls "naturalized mysterianism." This is the thesis, to put it baldly, that we are "constitutionally unequipped" to solve the mind-body problem, "rather as the cat's mind is not up to discovering relativity theory or evolution by natural selection." McGinn insists that there does exist a fact of the matter, a truth out there somewhere, and all the evidence we have suggests that this is consistent with a secular, naturalistic worldview, even if necessarily beyond its ken. In short, "the mechanism of consciousness is a mystery" to us because of the way our minds have evolved, but the successes of science in other fields give us reason to feel secure that there is a mechanism, and so we "can avoid being drawn into religious mysticism about consciousness."

The way McGinn argues for this thesis further reveals his presuppositions. He thinks of what he is doing as "providing a map of human knowledge and its limitations," and bringing us to recognize "our cognitive limits." Philosophers have knocked their heads against the mind-body problem for the past several hundred years, so it stands to reason that there is either something about it that resists our advances, or something about us that prevents us from thinking clearly about it. McGinn wants

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us to acknowledge that the problem is with us—that "the enemy is within." Philosophy, in this light, is about coming to terms with our finitude.

This is a noble conception of philosophy; but whether McGinn's view reveals the limits of human intelligence as it has evolved or the limitations of his own philosophical biases is an open question. He gives the latter possibility very little thought. And sometimes he made this reader wonder whether he had somehow blocked out the past hundred years of debates over epistemology, logic, and language. He writes, for example, that "thought is clearly not the same as reality." That is true enough, but it is not saying much. It also becomes questionable when used to pretend that "there, on the one hand, is the world with all its objects and properties, existing independently of us; here, on the other hand, is thought about the world"—as if consciousness and the world could be cleanly separated and studied apart from one another. Similarly questionable is McGinn's claim that "I form my concepts of consciousness through examining my own inner states, that is, through acts of self-awareness." This, too, seems to make perfect sense at first blush; but the important question in philosophy is what is done with such claims—what further claims they are used to support.

This notion leads McGinn to speculate, at the end of his book, that genetic engineering may offer us a way to overcome the mind-body problem: that, if we could only produce a human being with enough introspective power, we could dispel the mystery of our nature and see that "deep down we are quite ordinary, difficult as that may be to believe." We could, that is, become conscious of the material genesis of consciousness.

McGinn presents this genetically engineered consciousness as only "a theoretical possibility," and qualifies it with ethical qualms; but it is not clear what he has in mind. Here several questions might be asked. First, what does McGinn mean by introspective power? What would his super-introspect be introspecting? Further and deeper, why would the upshot of knowing how mind arises from matter be able to convince us that we are "quite ordinary"? This is itself difficult to believe. Why not conclude, instead, that matter (whatever matter finally "is," composed as it is of particles, waves, and force fields) is quite extraordinary, and we pulsing, throbbing beings—ashes from ashes—not a bad piece of work ourselves? □

Bernard G. Prusak *is a graduate student in philosophy at Boston University.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

after, Monsignor Cullinan hung up his stole for the day, and left. Eventually, they became fast friends, until Dad died a year later.

TONY WIGGINS
Wilton, Conn.

Dumbed down

I retired four years ago after more than thirty years of teaching at Southwest Texas State University. There I was a witness to the inception of the system described in Paul Trout's article ["Teacher Evaluations," April 21], and its disastrous consequences.

In the 1970s a wave of conservatism gained control of college administrations, and the watchword became to operate every university "like a business." In this model the students were viewed as customers, and the faculty became the dime-a-dozen clerks whose main function was to keep the customers happy, as indicated on their evaluations. Unfortunately for the future of the nation, all the administration's attention went to faking the latest glowing balance sheet of the "business," with statistics about the climbing rate of retention and graduation; none went to thinking about the quality of the product coming out of the dumbed-down system that resulted.

How bad does it get? On a final exam I once asked a class in computer literacy to write a paragraph or two describing how the advent of computers had changed the job of managers in business. One senior student's entire answer was: "They could check the computer [*sic*] work and see how correct it dones [*sic*]." A couple of days later that student received her diploma from SWTSU and went into the world a college graduate.

It is hard to be very optimistic about the future of a nation that chooses to squander the potential of its young people to achieve and learn. That is what we have done, first in the high schools, and now in our colleges and universities.

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DANCING, ADORABLY, IN THE WOMB

Elizabeth Kirkland Cahill

Recently I had an obstetrical ultrasound, nine weeks and three days into a new pregnancy. Its purpose was routine, merely to confirm the due date and the "viability," as the doctor said, of the fetus. I had been through this before, and expected no surprises. Indeed, with three other children at home, my main worry (admittedly far-fetched) was that I might be carrying twins.

After the ultrasound technician, a tall, soft-spoken man named Fred, had established the presence of only one fetus, he brought it into focus and zoomed in. I am by now fairly experienced at reading these things myself, and right away I saw the baby's tiny heart beating, eagerly and impossibly fast. Then Fred and I saw something else: "Oh look, the baby's doing the mambo," Fred chuckled. And it was. Its toes were wiggling, its body jiggling around, and its proportionally enormous head was bobbing about.

Fred paused a moment, drew in his breath. "Look at that baby moving," and he held up his thumb. "And to think it's about the size of my thumbnail." He returned to his work, remarking, "No matter how many ultrasounds I do, I'm amazed every time that something so small can move like that."

This is my fourth pregnancy. I would have predicted that by now my capacity for wonder would be diminished by pragmatism, experience, or the mere passage of time. Instead, I find the opposite to be true. There was something special about this ultrasound and the minuscule human being I saw in fuzzy black and white, dancing for joy. At nine weeks and three days, nothing is guaranteed, and, up until the ultrasound, I had chanted the usual self-protective mantra of the early days: "Wait until the first twelve weeks are over before you trust it." But when I saw that baby dancing, I fell irredeemably in love. Even if I were to suffer a miscarriage the next day, I simply had to love it from that moment on. It was not a matter of choice.

Part of my delight sprang from foreknowledge: the exuberant movement of this tiny creature prefigured, I well knew, the squirming smiles of an infant, the baby wiggles, the toddler's happy hugs, the joyous flips, kicks, and cartwheels of the preschooler, soccer player, and gymnast who inhabit my household today. The love I have for these three, enlarged and deepened over eight years as a mother, has enabled me to extend myself to this child I barely know in a way I have not experienced.

In the Frick Collection in New York City, tucked away in a side room, is a small miracle of a painting. Rendered by Gentile da Fabriano in the early fifteenth century, it is titled *Madonna and Child, with Saints Lawrence and Julian.* Jesus looks to be about eighteen months old, a beautiful blond toddler sitting in the lap of a regally robed Mary, who cocks her head affectionately toward her son. What arrests the viewer is the animation, the joy of this baby. He leans down toward the supplicating Julian, his eyes alight, his cheeks rosy, the toes on his right foot caught midwiggle. Were it not for Mary's loving restraint, he would surely catapult into Julian's arms. It is an uncommonly touching picture of a baby reveling in life. I am no theologian, but it seems to me that the joy animating the child Jesus is the same divinely granted joy that propels the dancing of my child within.

"Oh, Fred! We've actualy done it—we've brought a new human being into the world! How can we make it up to him?"

I am lucky: despite occasional qualms about my ability to manage four children, I am able, and willing, to answer the call to love a child who is yet unborn but, oh, so alive. There is no real conflict about offering up the "yes" to God. Others, perhaps, are not so fortunate, and truly find a pregnancy difficult, or impossible, to bear. Yet my dancing baby has reminded me that clinical terms like "first trimester," "viability," and "fetal tissue" obscure the deep and awesome truth of a human life in the making, a life that is, in the poetic words of the psalmist, "fearfully and wonderfully made."

We are not entirely out of the woods yet. There will be tests for chromosomal abnormalities, and, to judge from past pregnancies, plenty of anxieties, aches, and pains between now and my due date. I pray for a healthy baby and as few varicose veins as God can bear to give me. But whatever happens, I know that I shall carry forever within me the image of the dancing baby, wiggling, jiggling, dancing for joy, expressing in its own miniature way the presence of the divine. □

Elizabeth Kirkland Cahill, *a frequent contributor, is co-author with Joseph Papp of* Shakespeare Alive!

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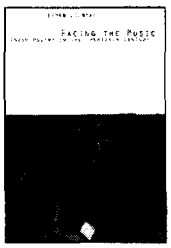

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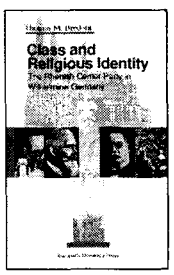

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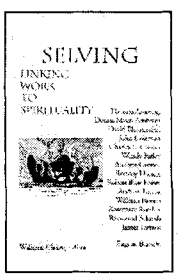

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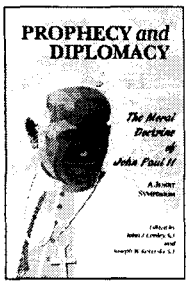

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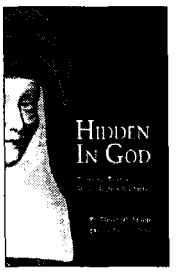

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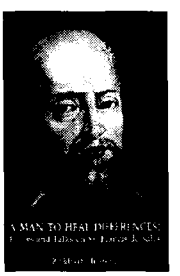

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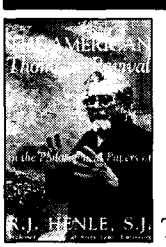

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